

RED SCREENS

A ROMANCE OF LAKELAND

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RED SCREENS

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FRANCE

THE STORY OF NUREMBERG

CHARTRES

FRIENDS THAT FAIL NOT

OXFORD AND ITS STORY

VENETIA AND NORTHERN ITALY

PROVENCE AND LANGUEDOC

Etc., Etc.

RED SCREES

A ROMANCE OF LAKELAND

BY

CECIL HEADLAM

LONDON

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1916

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TO
MY WIFE

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FOREWORD

BENEATH the red crags which give its name to Red Screes—the southernmost peak of the Helvellyn range—and just above the wild, grey-green moorland slopes of the Kirkstone Pass, there is cut, upon a solitary upstanding boulder, the rough shape of a Cross.

The flat surface of the rock is rapidly being covered by moss and lichen; and a young rowan-tree is sprouting at the base; so that already the Cross can scarcely be discerned, even at the distance of a few yards. Emblematic of the tragedy, and of the memory of the man it records.

The croak of a raven, the piercing bark of an eagle, the dolorous piping of the curlew, the bleating of a few Herdwick sheep, and the echo roused by the horn of a passing coach, are the only sounds that break the silence of that desolate spot, save when the wind is in the nick. For then the great gusts boom like cannon, as they strike the crags, gusts so terrific that—the dalesfolk say—they can actually be seen in their course, as they come “bumming and banging oop t’ ginnel.”

If I now break the larger silence, and tell in full the story of that rough memorial, which has hitherto been secret, or but half-suspected, it is because the time has come when all those concerned have passed away, or, so far from having any reason to object to its publication, are anxious rather that the true facts should be placed upon record, and an end put to all guess-work.



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RED SCREES

CHAPTER I

A MEETING IN CHANCERY LANE

NOT this reign, nor last reign, but the last reign but one. Can your memory or imagination carry you back so far?

Times have changed since then. But the story I have to tell is concerned chiefly with the things that do not change—with pure love, and base passion, and the fruits thereof; with greed of gold, with hatred and fear, where truly fear might be; and with revenge, the hot, blinding fury which drives men over the brink, not knowing whither they go, nor what they do.

These passions do not change overmuch, whatever gracious Sovereign sits upon the throne, in whatever country, in whatever clime. Only in the innumerable combinations to which they give rise, only in the countless permutations of individual action which they prompt, do they seem changeable as the skies among the mountains, various as the sands on the sea-shore.

The mirror of Life, in its majesty and its pettiness, in the permanence of its principles and the variety

and changeful uncertainty of its details, is the Law. And the mirror of the Law is Chancery Lane. Here, men and women, boys and girls, beggars and millionaires, lawyers and cranks, poets and practitioners, editors and policemen, buyers and sellers, frauds and investors, speculators and litigants, plaintiffs and defendants, jostle each other and elbow their way along the narrow pavements, or step into the road which follows the course of the old winding stream, eager as the torrent of yore to reach the sea, but checked, as it seems, at every yard, by a steady counter-flow of solicitors' clerks. And here, on one midday in March two reigns ago, there emerged two men from the old red-brick gateway of Lincoln's Inn into the current of the Lane.

The elder of the two was a small dark man, apparently about fifty years of age, who wore a peaked beard and close-cut whiskers. He was sharp-featured and alert, and yet his manner was that of one who wished to avoid remark. Phineas T. Nailes was not, indeed, otherwise remarkable, save that his mouth and ears and almond-shaped eyes, his sloping shoulders, and, above all, his turned-in toes might have suggested to a close observer that he could boast at least that quantity of Jewish blood in his veins which, a great Jew has told us, is almost indispensable to a man, if he intends to be a genius.

His companion offered in many ways a sharp contrast to him. Tall, thin, athletic in gait, so dark-complexioned that the most charitable could not refrain from harbouring a suspicion of the tar-brush, Bertram Leigh carried his head high. His glance bore witness to the supreme self-confidence of a man

determined to succeed, because he esteemed himself worthy of success. For the rest, his features were unusually handsome, and his age could not be more than twenty-eight.

They had passed rapidly from the bustling crowd that filled the great hall of the Law-Courts, through the quiet quadrangles of the Inn. A gleam of sunshine had lit up the dark green sward beneath the white Palladian façade of Stone Buildings, and revealed the lighter shade of the budding shoots of irises beneath the fig-tree and the vines on the walls of New Square. But a bitter blast and a scud of hail and sleet brought the twain to a momentary stand beneath the gateway.

"Golly, what a climate!" exclaimed the elder of the two, with a shiver. "Where are we, for any sakes?"

"That looks like Chancery Lane," replied the youth at his side, his dark face turning to an olive green beneath the scourge of the east wind. "It looks like Chancery Lane—and was christened so."

The neatness of his quotation was lost upon the illiterate, shivering Yankee. But not upon the world.

For a thin, gaunt figure had been crouching at his elbow, seeking shelter in the niche of the gateway behind the stall of an old apple-wife, whose cheeks shone rosier than her wares. Leaning forward now, he thrust a box of matches into the speaker's face.

"That's from 'Bleak House,'" he muttered. "And a bleak world it is, my masters! Box o' lights, sir?"

Bertram Leigh's lips curled disdainfully as he caught sight of the ragged figure. With an impatient gesture, he knocked the box of matches from the

shaking hand before his face. He had no pence to spare for such a shabby cur. He strode forward. His companion followed, an evil smile of approval flickering for an instant over his thin lips.

And the starving beggar, who chanced to be a famous Poet, picked up the spurned box of matches with numbed fingers and palsied hand. A smile, in which there was no trace of bitterness, lit up his face with a glow of pure delight.

"Dickens, yes!" he muttered reflectively, "'christened so'—that is pure Dickens and undefiled."

Phineas T. Nailes followed his companion some fifty yards up the Lane. He found some difficulty in keeping up with the lithe, athletic strides of the young man as he threaded his way skilfully through the crowd. Perhaps for this reason, among others, he presently touched him on the arm, and stopped opposite a restaurant. A sandwich-man, shivering beneath two boards, bore upon his shoulders the legend, "Five courses for a shilling."

"Five courses for a shilling! Gee whizz! This is bully for old man Nailes. We eat right here, my boy."

"I was making for the Holborn Restaurant," said the other. "You won't like this."

"Not like it? Five courses for a shilling! Why, it ain't nat'ral. Besides," he added, as he dived down some stone stairs into the restaurant, "Phineas T. Nailes is over here for a rest cure. He ain't on show at up-town restaurants for the present. This dive tickles me to death. Now I shall see how the Britishers feed."

The young man's lips curled again. He did not

attempt to conceal his disgust for the dirty cloth, the dripping sauce-bottles and superfluous crumbs at the only vacant places. Nailes took his seat with a nod to the two strangers who occupied the chairs on the opposite side of the little table.

"Say, what a bully thing edercation is, for sure," continued the American, as he tucked a corner of his napkin into the top of his waistcoat, and scrutinised the young man's look of increasingly supercilious disdain. "Here's me, worth nobody can guess how many million dollars, quite at home, and enjoying myself no end in this one-horse, jay eating-house; and I'm jiggered if there isn't you, with nary a cent to bless yourself with, standpat certain you're a darn side too good to be fed for nothing in such a place."

Bertram flushed.

"Don't you be offended, young man," continued the American, coolly. "It's just becas' you are as poor as a church-mouse, and as proud as the devil, and as ambitious as a Congressman, and as ignorant of finance as a cow-boy, and as unscrupulous as I am said to be, and as polished as a brass nail that—that *I am going to buy you*. Take that from Phineas T. Nailes."

Bertram started, struck by the cynical brutality of the wizened little Yankee as by the flick of a whip on his cheek. But at that moment the waitress approached, and seizing a menu-card, thrust it into the hand of the youthful clerk opposite. Roused to action, he stopped sucking his teeth, and, turning to the dishevelled girl-typist at his side, inquired—

"Wot's your fancy, Miss Samson?"

Without waiting for a reply, he turned to the

waitress and asked, with a hideous ogle that was intended for an ingratiating smile—

“Wot’s good to-day, Miss?”

Black, beady eyes shone upon him from beneath a pyramid of sausage-shaped curls. The beaming waitress read through the card from top to bottom.

“Pork and mashed is nice, and liver and bacon’s very good, and steak and kidney—no, steak-and-kidney-pudden’s off—and bald bird is good.”

Leigh winced, as once more the young man sucked his teeth and inquired—

“Is bald bird good to-day, Miss?”

The waitress leaned over him and smiled.

“It *looks* very tender, sir,” she replied confidentially.

“Two bald birds, veg., and mashed,” the youth returned quickly, for that smile had often been known to bewitch, and Miss Samson’s eye was upon him.

“What in creation is bald bird?” asked the American.

“Boiled chicken, sir,” the waitress smiled.

“A hairy customer, I expect,” said Leigh.

“Wa-al, I guess we had better follow suit, Miss,” said Nailes. “And now, Mr. Leigh, to business. It’s over six months since we met last in the West Indies, ain’t it?”

There was a look of concentrated hatred and venom in his little dark eyes, as he glanced side-long at his companion. But Leigh did not observe it. He was looking nervously at the young couple opposite. They were happily intent upon their menu, and each other. He turned with lessened apprehension to the millionaire, and nodded—

"About."

"You did me in the eye that time, young man."

Leigh's self-assurance reappeared. He smiled with all the patronizing complacency of a butler whose heirloom-method of keeping a Stilton cheese has been praised by a parvenu.

"I won the case," he said. "That was all. Of course, you understand there was nothing personal about it."

"Oh, I know all about Serjeant Buzfuz, and all that," snarled Nailes. "But personally, as President of the Chew-Chunk Insurance Corporation, the verdict cost me half a million dollars, and *some* credit."

"I'm sorry. But I had to do my best for my clients, you know."

"Of course," the other continued. "Everybody knows how Lawyer Leigh won that case for the Planters against the Insurance Companies. I figured it out that you practically saved the Island from bankruptcy after that tarnation fire and earthquake, by that slap-up piece of advocacy——"

The young barrister bowed to the compliment.

"Saved them, contrary to all probability, Law, Equity, or Justice," drawled the millionaire.

Leigh could not be sure whether that cold, clear drawl expressed approval or contempt.

"But it was not till to-day," continued Nailes, "that I understood the colossal nerve of the whole performance."

Leigh's swarthy countenance turned olive-green, as though another blast of the east wind had pierced his frame. He glanced again nervously at the

amorous couple opposite. His temples throbbed as he answered—

“I don’t understand what you mean.”

And yet he found himself inwardly amused as he watched the young man offering his sweetheart some sugar for her tea, and heard the frowsy typist reply, with an air of prim superiority, “Thank you, no ! I do not indulge.”

His brain busied itself with the thought that her lover was calculating how much a year he would save with such an economist for a wife, at so many lumps of sugar per day. And then, with a cold sweat of agony on his brow, he had to listen whilst the imperturbable millionaire continued, in his matter-of-fact and chilling drawl, to recount the story, as if it had been a new tale from the Law Courts, told of another barrister, of another Inn.

“I was asking about you, when I saw you in Court this morning. And they told me how you had taken up that case, and gone out to Barbugo in term time—becas’—well, becas’ other busier lawyers hadn’t the time, and you, they said, were hungry for a job. And, when you were out there, they told how the case had been delayed and postponed, not without a little help from yourself, it was hinted ; and then, when the case was coming on at the beginning of the English Law Term, how you rushed your clients by booking your passage home—and by telling them that your practice demanded your return ; how, when they came to beg you to stay and conduct the case on which their all depended, you showed them a cable from your clerk, urging you to return, becas’ your clients were beseiging your chambers, and he

was refusing briefs by the score every day in your absence—and how you made it plain to them that only a thumping refresher could induce you to stay.”

“They chose to pay it,” said Leigh, surlily.

“You were the only white lawyer in the Island, and they had to. Golly, but it was smart! And you hadn’t had twenty briefs in your life, and were half starving on bar-coaching.”

“I won their case,” said Leigh, defiantly.

“By appealing to the jury to consider that, if they decided in favour of us—of the Insurance people—they themselves, and everybody in the Island, would all be ruined. Golly, but it was smart. Mind you, I bear no malice. Nailes ain’t the sort to carry a grouch about in his inside, you bet.” He grinned hideously. “But——” and here the millionaire leaned closer to Leigh and spoke in his ear. “The Bar don’t like it over here. You’re not going to succeed on the straight ticket at the Bar after that. It’s up to you to consider what—with all your ability, ambition, poverty, and—and—unscrupulousness—what are you going to do?”

“You’re infernally impertinent, familiar, and insulting, as well as wholly misinformed, sir,” replied Leigh, his handsome features quivering—was it with honest rage, or sham indignation pumped up to hide the bitterness of his mortification?

“Don’t you worry about that!” replied the other. “Phineas T. Nailes don’t think it worth while to get wrong information. I ain’t blaming you for being a bright boy. I ain’t going to pick on you, becas’, like all bright boys, you’ve been a little too much in a

hurry and burnt your fingers on a live coal, which you thought was chilled becas' it wasn't red. *Any* bright boy might do that. The point is, that that little slip up of yours has busted up your career at the Bar here." He raised his hand to check an outburst from Leigh. "Now, for any sakes, don't fly away and get mad. It has bust up your career here, *and* it has shown me the man I want. Why, man-alive, I'm a buyer of Leigh stock every time!"

At this moment the waitress dumped down before them two dishes containing some unrecognizable portions of a long-lived and no doubt blameless hen, embedded in a mass of evil-smelling cabbage.

"As I said before, I am a buyer of Leigh stock up to any reasonable figure. You know who I am. I guess Phineas T. Nailes is known to every live man all over the world as the brainiest financier in N' Yark. Phineas, my boy, has got on top of Wall Street every time, and *that's* no cinch. Phineas T. Nailes is now, for reasons of his own, spending some months in domestic seclusion with his only daughter, in an outlandish spot in the English Lake District. He has got to take a real vacation rest somewhere out of the world. And Corah is sweet on what she calls Wordsworthshire."

"A vile phrase," Leigh interjected.

"Phineas T. Nailes will be bored stiff. But that ain't no concern of yours, except that he needs a man to talk to besides his valet, and a Secretary to write his letters for him, and, er——"

For the first time there was a check in the quick, staccato sentences.

"And?" queried Leigh.

"Why, send off his cables and wires."

"Is that all?"

"No. He must do the polite to any of the tarnation gentry who may come buzzin' around, and protect him from having to do the polite himself. Becas' Phineas T. ain't a sassiety bird, and don't see himself on his hind legs bowing and scraping to Dukes and Lord Gold Sticks in Waiting all the time."

Leigh smiled. "I think I could manage all that for you," he said.

"That's a good boy. Now for the figure. Nailes ain't any pincher. I don't believe in cheap men. I have always bought the best writers, the best lawyers, and the best politicians. I figured it out long ago that that paid. I want to buy *you*, becas' I think you are the man I want for my purpose right here. I don't deal in low-priced men. I shan't dicker about the graft. No. I offer you a salary of one thousand of your English pounds a year. Is it a bargain?"

"Guineas!" said Leigh. His hand shook at his own impudence.

"Guineas, whatever they may be," replied the millionaire with indifference. "Your currency makes me tired. But there is one condition. I have told you what you're to be there for. There's one thing you are not to be there for."

"And that is?"

"You've not got to worry about any of my Stock Exchange transactions that may pass through your hands. Phineas T. Nailes has many properties, but a brass band is not one of them. And you are to keep your mouth shut. You understand? Shake! So! Golly, here's for bald bird!"

Nailes ate his way through the piled-up dish almost in silence, with a ferocious concentration of purpose, as though it had been a problem in freights, or a ticklish question of brokerage. When he had finished, he pushed back his plate, extracted his napkin from his waistcoat, and wiped his lips.

"Guess we needn't ante up for the other four courses," he said. "Unless you're coming in? I pass. When I get through I stop. No one has ever been able to make me say more than I want, not even a N' Yark pressman. And I ain't got time to burn, like a Britisher. Just you size it up, and if you like the job, say, and it's all fixed. If it's O.K., then you join me in a fortnight. Windermere is the station, Corah says, and she'll write you about trains. So long."

He was gone, leaving the dazed youth to settle the bill with the beaming waitress of the sausage-curls.

Through what agonies of rage, and scalding shame, of injured vanity and gnawing greed Bertram Leigh had passed during that hideous half-hour, even those who liked him least at Winchester, at Oxford, and at the Bar, should in mercy shrink from imagining. In the face of the Yankee's cold-blooded exposition of the unfortunate crisis in his own affairs, he had swallowed his pride, for two reasons. In the first place, everything that Nailes had said was true: was, if anything, understated. That, in itself, he would have regarded as of little account, if, in the second place, the man who spoke to him with such a terrible directness, with such a dominating cynicism, had not been, as he had asserted, world-famous. Famous,

indeed, or infamous, in the eyes of the world, according as each individual censor in it regarded the morality of Stock Exchange gambling, or as each had won or lost in attempting to follow the dazzling deals of the financier; infamous certainly, by any application of the great democratic principle of counting heads. For the losers in every endeavour to profit through the operations of Phineas T. Nailes, when he set out to corner a railway, or to boss any section of the New York market, were, from brainy magnates in Wall Street down to speculating tenderfoots in England, incredibly in the majority.

Now Leigh was in difficulties. The bait, therefore, of a comparatively immense salary, and the boundless prospect of wealth to be amassed by his own astuteness as the confidential secretary of a man whose wealth could be calculated as little as his manœuvres, appealed to him with irresistible force. His whole life had been an unremitting struggle to succeed. He had succeeded, so far, through the unaided efforts of his intelligence, and his truly superb self-reliance.

He had been left an orphan, and unexpectedly penniless, while still at Winchester. For his father had died suddenly, and his estate had proved bankrupt. But Bertram Leigh had both ambition and grit. He had kept himself at Oxford by the aid of scholarships and journalism, and had afterwards managed to get called to the Bar.

And now he found himself, thanks to one false step of imaginative buccaneering, stranded and marooned in Chancery Lane; found himself, in fact, in the position of one of the most hopeless of all human

beings, a professional man who has had his chance, who has over-reached himself, and wrecked his own career—a barrister, in short, on his beam-ends.

It was not pride, it was not mortification, that made him hesitate at all, when, left alone, he endeavoured to decide whether to accept or to decline an offer, in the circumstances, so surprisingly desirable. It was fear. For to accept, meant to place himself from the start at a disadvantage with an employer whom he knew to be, when on the trail, as sharp and relentless as a stoat in pursuit of a rabbit. A man, too, whom he had wounded in his most sensitive part—his pocket. But evidently he bore no grudge—admired his cleverness rather. And a thousand a year for that sort of work, and these chances of making a fortune! What did it matter if he did feel an intense antagonism towards the man? The daughter might make life less irksome. And Windermere! In such a country one could get away from such a man, if he became too odious. No, all that was emotional—the side of himself he was always struggling to repress. He had need of cool brains. He would consult a lawyer, and a Scotsman.

So arguing with himself, he rose and left the restaurant, and, dodging a score of 'buses and drays, crossed Holborn, then dived beneath the archway which separates the peaceful precincts of Gray's Inn from the ceaseless roar of London traffic.

The old Hall faced him. Within its red-brick buttresses and walls, when Francis Bacon was treasurer, the plays of Shakespeare are said to have been performed for the delectation of the Benchers and Students, and of good Queen Bess.

But Leigh cared for none of these things. Crossing to a familiar staircase, he ran up the steep wooden steps till he reached the chambers described as "two pair right." He gave a perfunctory knock, and entered the chambers of the canniest Scot in Lawyerdome.

Of him it was said that, when his uncle, whom he had assiduously toadied, had died and left him a smaller legacy than he thought was his due, he sent in a bill to the executors, charging the estate with sixpence for every time the deceased had taken tea with him. . . .

The man, Leigh reflected, is a cad, and a Scotch cad; but his advice on a matter of this kind is priceless.

Two small light blue eyes gazed at him beneath shaggy red eyebrows, which the lawyer slightly raised, thereby deepening the furrows on his forehead, a feat which would have been deemed impossible by any unprejudiced observer beforehand.

"I want your opinion on my case, Macpherson," exclaimed Leigh, precipitately; "I won't take a minute to explain——"

"It would scairr-cely be regular," replied Macpherson, cautiously. "Have you consulted your soleecitor? It is hardly professional, is it?"

"Oh, that doesn't matter."

"I'm no surprised that *you* do not think so, mannie!"

Leigh flushed at the sly reference to his notorious chicanery in Barbugo. He bit his lip, and continued quietly—

"I mean I want your advice as a friend, on what to do."

He stated his case briefly.

Macpherson considered a moment. "Nailes?" he said presently, "Nailes over here? Well, here or there, nobody knows what he is worth. But you ask me what I advise you to do? Can ye tell me noo?" he leaned forward, and put the question with quiet intensity, "Has he any dochters?"

"One, I believe," replied Leigh.

"Then go—and marry her," returned the Scot, turning back to his briefs.

From this Leigh deduced that that sagacious man of affairs considered the financial position of the millionaire to be unassailable.

"And a pretty pair ye'll mak', the twa o' ye, if the lassie takes after her father," commented Macpherson, grimly, as the door closed upon Bertram Leigh.

CHAPTER II

DR. MERRIMAN AT HOME

A FORTNIGHT later Leigh took his seat in the mid-night express, as it glided, like some monstrous serpent, noiselessly out of Euston station. He wrapped a rug round his legs, and prepared to enjoy the remainder of his half-smoked cigar, before composing himself for the night journey.

"What would you call the best show in London to-day?" asked the only other occupant of the carriage, fresh from the music-halls, and eagerly conversational.

Leigh turned to the window, and let it down a couple of inches.

"The best show in London?" he answered, with a supercilious drawl. "Oh, Euston station, when you are leaving it."

After a night of such broken rest as attends all passengers in this crowded island, he woke to find the train puffing and snorting through grey moorland, bounded in the distance by the Yorkshire hills, and intersected by the wooded streams and green stone walls of "Bonny Westmorland."

The train drew out of the old grey town of Kendal. Leigh inhaled deep breaths of the pure air, in the

intervals of munching a sandwich. Then he beheld the early morning sun shining over amethystine fells, touching with gold the sharp cone of Ill Bell and lighting the green woods beyond the lovely curves of Windermere.

He had wakened, as it were, to another world. The commonplace marvel of the railway had, in a few hours, wrought for him, and in him, the miracle of the transition from the ugliness and cynicism of London, to the beauty and romance of Lakeland. The years of embittering, selfish struggle, which had sadly stunted his moral perceptions, slipped away from him. The freshness and enthusiasm of youth returned to him with the pure air of the dawn amongst the mountains. The mood was not likely to last. But one may well believe that such a mood, in such a moment is counted to a man for righteousness.

It was in such a mood, at any rate, that Bertram Leigh left the station, and struck down to the Ferry, which crosses Windermere below Bowness Bay. And if he had to wait until the cumbrous and intermittent old ferry-boat came across the water, groaning and creaking as it picked up the wire cable from the bottom of the Lake, well, waiting at such a spot, on such a morning, seemed no hardship.

He had announced his arrival at Nailes' house for six o'clock that evening, and had begged not to be met at the station. For he wished to renew the pleasure of approaching, at leisure and upon foot, a scene which he had learned to love whilst upon a "reading party" from Oxford, and which he had treasured ever since as a memory of untarnished loveliness.

When the ferry-boat took the water, the curving outlines of the lake were revealed. Across Bowness Bay, the green vale of Troutbeck rose above Windermere village, and carried the eye onwards to Wansfell, Red Screes, and the Kirkstone Pass. Beyond, lay Fairfield, like a sleeping hippopotamus, his smooth, round back veiled in a blue haze. Crowning the half-crater of Helvellyn, Striding Edge gleamed like a scimitar in a sheath of fresh fallen snow. To the left, loomed up the Langdale Pikes.

Soon a group of wooded islets closed the mountains from view. Leigh turned his eyes towards the nearing shore. Amongst the hanging woods of Claife Heights the brilliant green of sprouting larches alternated with the bronze of budding oaks, the yellow-green and pale copper of the beeches, and the darker shades of Scotch firs, sycamores and spruces. Beneath those richly timbered slopes miniature bays fretted the shore-line. Under an azure sky, the tiny waves of the peaceful Lake, blue as the Mediterranean itself, broke upon grassy levels shot with yellow and gold. For in the grass, to the accompaniment of the gentle breeze, danced myriads of daffodils, and through the tree-stems countless primroses peeped and laughed.

"Oh heavens! It is good to be alive and to be here!" cried Leigh, intoxicated with the peculiar exhilaration of mountain air and lakeland beauty.

Leaping ashore before the ferry touched land, he strode off in the direction of Briers Hill, which leads to Leva's Water. After one last long look at the golden-brown reeds that fringed the little bay on his left, Leigh started up that steep, deceptive hill at

a pace which proclaimed at once a sound heart, a sanguine temperament, and the indomitable energy of impatient youth. For all that, he was glad enough to stop and mop his brow, and turn to look back over Windermere, when, halfway up, the road made a broad bend, and offered to the climber a natural resting-place.

Such at least was the opinion of a carrier's powerful horse, which stood obstinately jibbing and backing a hooded cart, loaded with barrels, sacks, luggage, packing cases, and agricultural implements. Leigh watched the carrier. A tall, handsome man, large, loose-limbed, long-armed, heavy-jawed, blue-eyed, he was built on the lines of the Scandinavian race who inhabit the "thwaites" and "fells" and "dales" and "seats," so named by their Viking forefathers, a race who still speak the old Norse tongue among themselves, and who for generations have eaten the "haver-bread" the Vikings ate, and drunk in their homesteads milk churned by the creamstick of holy ash, the "Igdrasil" of the Vikings.

Instead of beating the animal, as Leigh expected, or pulling at its bridle, or coaxing and encouraging it, the carrier leaned against the wall and watched it, now and again ejaculating some remark of a slightly sarcastic kind, such as—

"Nay, I wouldna fash mesel," or "That's richt, laddie, bide a wee an' tak' a rest," or, "Wilt na tak' a sup o' watter fra t' trough, befoor thou gangs til t' cop?"

But these gentle sarcasms had little effect. The horse stood with his forefeet planted apart, obstinately still, head down, the cart at right angles across the road.

At length the carrier appeared to think that the time for action had come. He advanced a step or two towards the recalcitrant horse, shaking his fist at him, more in sorrow than anger, and exclaimed in a tone of supreme contempt—

“Nay, Dick, if I war a horse, I wad be a horse, an’ no’ a silly fule!” As if stung to the quick by the taunt, the horse flung round and started up the hill with a rush, and the carrier went in pursuit. The horse stopped as he came up with it.

“Nay, Dick,” said the man, patting the sweating beast. “It’s fully war’rum I reckon, and m’appen t’ load’s ower heavy for thee.” He pulled a nine-gallon cask of beer from off the tail of the cart, and shouldering it, strode off up the hill, followed by his horse and cart. Leigh was left gasping and incredulous.

“What a country, and what a people!” he exclaimed, pausing again presently to identify, in the roofless, paneless, skeleton of an old dwelling lying stricken and deserted behind an ancient yew and a withered thorn-tree, the abode of Wordsworth’s Recluse. At length he reached the top of the hill, and caught his first glimpse of the Lancashire fells on his left, the Old Man and Wetherlam, upon which Ruskin loved to gaze, and in front of him the tops of the Scafell range. A delicious fragrance rose from the chimneys of a village below, the delicate, sweet aroma of burning hazel-sticks, which is the staple fuel of the farms of these parts. The crimson coppices, whence they were cut, were pied with yellow catkins and starred with buds just breaking into leaf.

Leigh followed the road as it dropped down

suddenly after passing through a little village. The white rough-cast houses, with their round chimneys, and roofs of green slate, hewn from the bowels of the Old Man yonder, were huddled, he noticed, close to the highway, as though afraid to stray too far up the fell on the one side, or too close to the lake on the other. Below him, on his left, he now beheld, across an old irregular stone wall, dotted with mosses and ferns and lichen, the long levels of another lake.

Green meadows and close-cropped, grassy moraine heaps dipped so gently into shallow, pellucid, stony bays, that the eye could not tell where meadow ended or lake began. Tiny, rounded promontories, almost islands, were encircled, at the water's edge, by a coronet of magnificent Scotch firs. These, and the cattle that grazed beneath them, and the budding hawthorns were all reflected in the burnished mirror of Levamere. Beyond the further shore, and above the intervening moorland, bronze and copper with the bracken and heather of yester-year, gold and green with the bursting of this year's spring, rose the Coniston Fells and the Scafell range, their tops touched with the silver of fresh fallen snow. Reaching a spot where only a few yards of meadow divided the road from an encroaching bay, Leigh stopped to drink in the peace and loveliness of the scene, and to luxuriate in the blazing sunshine.

There was a boat close in shore. He found himself vaguely watching two fishermen casting a spoon, and spinning for pike. Suddenly he was startled by a shout from the boat. One of the men was hailing him by name. He could not distinguish him, for his face was concealed by a sportsman's shapeless tweed

hat pulled down over his eyes. But in a moment the boat was being pulled in shore, and he was being welcomed by an old College friend, whom he had not seen or thought of for years, Lancaster Syms.

Lancaster Syms was blessed with a name which ought to have belonged to a fashionable West-End physician, and doubtless would have done so, had not its owner been endowed with a temperament wholly devoid of ambition, a character of transparent honesty and simplicity, and a taste for the open country which made life in a town unthinkable, even though it might mean the difference between £300 and £3000 a year.

He greeted Leigh heartily and, learning that he was not pressed for time, invited him to get into the boat and try his rod.

"Let me introduce you to Dr. Merriman," he said, as Leigh stood hesitating by the gunwale.

The old man in the stern of the boat was dressed in rough homespun.

An immense beard and moustache, unkempt whiskers and shaggy eyebrows almost concealed his features. But beneath the shade of a strong aquiline nose and a high forehead, two twinkling blue eyes shone forth through this thicket of hair, their colour intensified by so much of a sallow complexion as was visible.

"Step in, lad," he cried heartily, in a strong North Country accent, "and try a cast. There's no better coarse fishing in England, though the wind, what there is of it, is too hask to-day—it's *above*, you see—that means from the North in this dale. And the water is too glishy for my taste."

Leigh thanked him and clambered into the boat as he pushed her off.

"No, I'll watch you for a bit and talk. I've had a good walk and would rather rest for a time," he answered, as both fishermen pressed him to take their rods.

"My case is easily explained," said Syms presently, after a few casts had been made over a favourite shoal, and there was time to talk. "I am medicine-man to those misguided folk in the district who don't insist on seeing my senior partner. And you—how came you to be taking a holiday in term time?"

"I have chucked the Bar," returned Leigh. "I am—er—confidential secretary to a millionaire, who has taken a house in these parts."

"Really? Manchester, Liverpool, Africa or America?"

"America. The usual American financier, only more amazing than most——"

"Not Nailes?"

"Yes, Nailes. Phineas T. Nailes. There it is, you see—the usual syncopated name, like Waterproof K. Boots—the usual American millionaire, who after starting life as a lift-boy, ends as a King of Commerce. The intervening period, which would be so much the most interesting, is seldom fully explained. Anyway, you wouldn't expect *me* to explain, in this case."

So, concealing his ignorance, he gave himself an air of superior knowledge. It was miscalculated.

"Nay, man," interjected the old man from the stern, "Phineas T. Nailes is too big a fish—Hullo! was that a run? No—only touched bottom I'm afraid—But we'll show you some fine sport in a

moment—Nailes, as I was saying, is too big a scoundrel to be quite usual in any country.”

“That’s rather a hard saying,” said Leigh, as he lit a pipe with a supercilious air. “But I expect people’s views of a great financier vary according to the price of the shares in the concerns with which he is identified.”

“Mine would not,” retorted the old doctor. “For I don’t hold with gambling on the Stock Exchange in any form. Those who choose to gamble, deserve to lose, according to my way of thinking. But, judging the man by the ethics of the world he lives in, I suppose one ought not to call him a scoundrel because he has ruined millions of gulls. In the world of finance, they tell me, it is recognized as part of the game to let in the public by almost every artifice of false report, newspaper rigging and intriguing rumour. But Nailes has rather overstepped the mark, hasn’t he?”

Leigh stared at the speaker in amazement. He had not expected so much sophistication in these sequestered dales. The air of a condescending listener to rustic ignorance fell from him like a mantle. In its place, gradually and half unconsciously, he donned the garb of a young man sitting at the feet of a Gamaliel. It was a not unusual change when old Dr. Merriman chose to express an opinion.

“Nailes, I mean—and you’ll correct me if I am wrong—is usually credited not only with having ruined half America in the process of making his pile out of other less successful gamblers, and with having almost succeeded in bribing the Senate to cover up his defalcations; but what I understand is

not liked about him in financial circles is, that he has made a practice of letting in his partners, in deal after deal, in order to make his own successes the more certain and the more overwhelming."

"I know nothing of that," returned Leigh, hotly.

"No," replied the old man, coolly, as he drew in his line to examine the bait, "I thought you wouldn't. But perhaps you ought to. Well, Syms, I think we must give up the pike. The water is too clear. Let's have a try for perch."

Syms assented, and the two fishermen reeled in their lines, and were busy for a while with bait cans and changing their tackle.

"We'll have to row down the lake a bit to where perch lie," said Syms to Leigh. "Will you take an oar? My friend was—is, a great oarsman," he said, smiling admiration. "He won the Henley Sculls."

Leigh roused himself, and after a look of derision at the clumsy row-locks, graciously took an oar. They rowed for a mile or so towards the head of the lake, past smooth green promontories fringed at the water's edge with sycamores, gigantic oaks, and towering fir trees. At length, beyond a golden barrier of last year's yellowed bulrushes, they came in sight of a village near the water-head, nestling beneath a flat-backed church. The four corners of the church-tower were decorated with pinnacles shaped like the wings of a viking's helmet. A stalwart, motherly church it was, protecting, as a hen her brood, the group of white and yellow houses which were huddled beneath her, and which sought shelter from the rough weather that drives up from the sea, or down from the mountain gullies; protecting too, as it was

deemed, young and old from the fearsome boggarts and gruesome flays that haunt the wild encircling moors and the deep, lone ghylls of the scarred fells beyond. In serried ranks on the horizon rose a rocky rampart of mountains, dim now in a blue haze, nature's vast outwork enfolding the ancient settlement of that unknown Scandinavian chieftain who gave his name to Harkerseat.

Here on the lake the fishermen paused, and, after dropping their bait in the still water, watched their floats, in the hope of a nibble from a perch. But the floats never bobbed. After half an hour's wait they shifted their position. The enthusiasm of the old doctor never waned. He perpetually assured his guest that they would have great sport presently, and that, once the fish came on the feed, he would have an astonishing time.

Leigh, who was no fisherman, had quickly grown tired of waiting. He was soon aware, too, that he was more than a little hungry. He had had a long journey, a good walk, and only a couple of sandwiches since dinner overnight. But he was a little overawed by the old doctor; he did not wish to be rude to Syms: he had admitted that he was a free man for the day; and it was not yet twelve o'clock. He could not in decency throw up the sponge and demand lunch, or to be set ashore, in the presence of such ardent sportsmen. He must row out the course, he told himself. He tried to forget the pangs of hunger by taking a rod, by watching the unmoved floats, by smoking desperately, by inquiring into the habits of fish, by sucking a tooth-pick, by every known device of staving off starvation, save that of

eating his boots. He remembered with longing the *entrée* he had refused at dinner overnight, and cursed his folly.

"They are bound to lunch soon," he told himself every half-hour, when the sweet chimes, floating from the old church-tower, caressed his waiting ears. But nothing seemed further from the thoughts of his companions. One o'clock struck, and half-past one.

"What about lunch?" he asked suddenly in desperation.

The old doctor looked up from his float in surprise.

"Lunch?" he repeated, in a tone of incredulity.

"Why, we're *fishing*!"

Then, as if to atone for his brusqueness, he turned to Syms.

"Have you got a snack with you?"

"I'm afraid I've only this," he said as he offered Leigh a stick of chocolate. "But it will keep you going."

Leigh took it and deliberately ate it all.

"You won't think about lunch when the fish come on," said Dr. Merriman.

For two more hours of painful craving and growing boredom Leigh held out, while the monotony of the motionless floats was varied only by a change of position on the lake. The weather had grown colder, though it was still bright. In vain for the unhappy youth did the doctor point out the nesting places of the great crested grebe, and enumerate the long list of rare birds that frequent these peaceful waters. The sound of snipe drumming in the air above him, of countless gulls screaming on the shore, of peewits

crying in the meadows, and curlews piping on the moors, gave him no respite or solace.

At last, faint with hunger, he said, in a tone that left no room for refusal—

“I think we had better chuck it, and have some lunch. I am really in want of food.”

“Why, of course we will, if you are hungry,” said the old doctor. “Come round to my shanty, and we’ll see what there is to be had. I hope I haven’t kept you out too long. You see, I never think of food for myself—not, I mean, when I am fishing.”

Syms suggested that they should all go with him to his lodgings in the village for a meal. But Dr. Merriman would not hear of it.

“My place is so much handier to the water,” he said. “We’ll just have a snack, and then get to work again, and catch the beggars on the evening rise. We must show your friend some sport, before we let him go.”

They rowed towards a small white cottage, planted almost on the level of the lake, half a mile from the village. Dr. Merriman cast a wistful gaze at the water. Then he led the way through a rickety gate into a little garden, tented and enclosed in wire netting. It was dotted about with poles, to which was chained a whole aviary of birds of prey. At sight of him, they rose and flapped their wings, and raised a hideous clamour of shrieks.

“I know you used to be an amateur of oddities, when we were at Oxford,” said Syms to Leigh, as they followed their host. “And I think you’ll find my chief worth adding to your collection.”

"For the Lord's sake, let's get something to eat," replied Leigh, ravenously cross.

The old doctor was looking at his birds, and searching about under the hedge.

"The butcher must have forgotten them this morning," he said at length. "You see," he explained to Leigh, "I arrange with him to throw some scraps over the hedge when he passes. But he often forgets. The lad's no' that dependable, as we say in these parts."

Furiously hungry, Leigh's swift mind seized what was for him the salient point. The butcher evidently did not *call*, he only passed the house. What could there be for lunch?

The old man lingered, talking of his birds, and drew Leigh's attention to his pet treasures. There was a great buzzard, and a raven, a golden eagle, and a hooded crow, and a peregrine falcon, brought from the precipitous crags of Ravenscar.

"Shall we have a look at them after lunch?" said Leigh. "I'm really getting quite faint with hunger."

"Of course, of course," cried the old man. "I was forgetting. Let us go and see what there is."

He opened a door, from which the paint had almost disappeared. The tiny hall was filled with rods and landing nets and garments for rough weather. He led the way up some steep stairs. They were littered with old newspapers and wood-chips.

"The best carpet in the world," explained the doctor. "You can get as many as you want from the hoopers for twopence."

He opened a door into a sitting-room. From the oaken beams in the ceiling hung a dozen birdcages, some empty, some occupied by songsters. The floor was covered with wood-chips and bird-seed. The table was crowded with bottles of medicine, fishing tackle, half-made flies, and the moth-eaten forms of ancient stuffed birds. An immense perch, in process of being set up, occupied the most accessible part of it.

"There's not much room here," said Merriman, "we'll just have to make a picnic of it. Sit you down yonder, and we'll see what we can find."

He pointed to a huge armchair, the only chair in the room. Without apology to Syms, Leigh flung himself into it. The seat crackled, and gave way beneath him.

"Put in some more newspapers, Syms," said the doctor, as he disappeared into an adjoining room.

"The springs of the old man's chair gave way during the Crimean War," Syms explained slowly. "Since then he has adopted the simple device of filling it up from the top with newspapers, to counteract its natural tendency to sink."

Leigh gasped, inarticulate with hunger and amazement. His dazed eyes wandered to the walls, which were covered with shelves loaded with bottles. The bottles were filled with a yellowish liquid, in which stood or floated the weirdest collection of objects.

"What, for Heaven's sake, are those?" he asked.

"Well," said Syms, hesitatingly, "they are objects of interest, that is, if you happen to be a naturalist—or a doctor—or both, like our host."

Dr. Merriman popped his head in from the adjoining room.

“Syms,” he cried, “I’m sure I had a pair of kippers somewhere. Come and help me to find them.”

Again Leigh gasped. Syms disappeared. Presently an appalling smell of paraffin oil was followed by the denser reek of smoke from an oil stove. At last the doctor emerged, flushed with triumph. He bore upon a plate, the pattern of which was unrecognizable by reason of past culinary episodes, two kippered herrings, half burnt, half raw. Beaming with hospitality, he placed them before his frantic guest. Leigh was so hungry that he swallowed his disgust and the kippers almost without a qualm.

“Eh, but ye were sharp-set!” exclaimed Merriman. He had now found some dry bread and an ancient cheese, upon which all three fell heartily. “So you were asking about my curios? They may not be great wine perhaps, but they are all well corked and bottled. Talking of that, did you ever hear tell of the Glasgie waif’s brother? It was in my student days. Some kind folk were taking an interest in a lone la’al* lad they found starving in the streets. They asked him if he had no one who could look after him—no kith or kin of any sort?

“‘Weel’ he answered, ‘a’ hae a brither at the Univairseety.’

“‘Come,’ they said, pleased enough at the thought that here was somebody upon whom they could shunt the responsibility for the wee lad. ‘Come, a brither at the Univairsity! Eh, but that’s fine. He’ll be able to help ye, surely?’

“‘Na,’ replied the lad, ‘he wull no can.’

“‘And what for no?’ says they. ‘Why will he

* Little.

not be able to help you? It's a grand position, to be at the Univairisity.'

"'I ken fine it is a grand poseetion,' replied the lad. 'But I ken fine ma brither canna' help me. He's corrkitt in a bottle.'

"'Corked in a bottle, laddie?'

"'Aye, corrkitt in a bottle. He was borrun wi' twa heeds.'"

The old doctor greeted the climax of his own story with a roar of laughter, in which the younger men joined.

"But some of these things may interest you," he continued, turning affably to Leigh. "Let me show you this, for instance, this curious example——"

But Leigh could bear no more.

"Excuse me," he said, "but I have got a touch of indigestion. Could you give me a little brandy or something of that kind?"

"I'm very sorry," said Dr. Merriman, with kindly concern. "I am indeed. Perhaps you went too long without food, and that was my fault. But a drop of brandy will set you right, a drop of brandy certainly."

He turned and disappeared into the adjoining room. It was some time before he reappeared. Leigh, green and reproachful, gazed gloomily at Syms, whilst a great moving of bottles was heard in the next room.

At length the doctor appeared with a glass half full of brandy and water, chiefly brandy. Leigh took it and after he had drunk it, rose, and saying that he felt much better, added that he must be going.

"Yes," said the old man, "it's time we got back to work. I'll wager the fish are just waiting for us now."

"I am afraid I must leave them to you," replied Leigh, firmly. "I really must make my way to the Nailes' house now," inwardly vowing that nothing should induce him to get into that boat again.

"What? Stop fishing? at this hour?" cried Dr. Merriman in horror and amazement. "Impossible!"

"I simply must," said Leigh.

"Well, well, if you must, you must. We will set you on your way. But you must come and have a proper day's sport soon."

Leigh thanked him, and escaped hurriedly from the little cottage. From the stale atmosphere of moth-eaten birds and unkempt rooms he emerged into a mellowed afternoon. The air was deliciously sweet and fresh, but warmer, for the wind had fallen, and the rays of the westering sun still powerful enough to be genial, had turned the sky to pale blue and soft primrose; and, striking across the soft upland meadows, threw an amethystine glow upon the old mortarless walls that chequered the fells.

The old doctor refused to return to his boat.

"Nay," said he, "we will set you as far as Harkerseat."

"It is an astonishing compliment from the old man," whispered Syms. "I have never seen him stop fishing for any one before."

But Leigh was past compliments. His multiple experiences had overtaxed him, and the brandy he had drunk failed in its office. Presently he came to a halt.

"I'm feeling awfully rotten," he said. "Indijuggers is a beastly thing, really."

Syms asked sympathetically for his symptoms.

The old doctor stood by, ruminating, seeking for the cause.

“I can’t make it out,” he said. “You’ve had a day in the open air, and that can do a man nobbut good. You’ve had a good plain meal, nothing rich—a baby could have dealt with it—the only thing is, no, it couldn’t have been the brandy. It was perfectly good brandy. I only opened the bottle last week; and I have *only pickled one bird in it!* No! it *couldn’t* have been the brandy!”

But whether it was or not, Leigh’s constitution refused any longer to inquire.

CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

BERTRAM LEIGH was roused next morning from a nightmare, in which an old Man of the Mountains, disguised as a bird of prey, had seemed to be intent on tearing out his vitals. By degrees the bird of prey resolved itself into a footman, who was asking him dispassionately whether he would like the curtains drawn, and whether he took tea. With a groan of relief, Leigh murmured yes. And by the time the tea was brought, he had so far regained consciousness as to remember that when, overnight, after an hour of agony, he had at length reached his destination, he had been still too much upset to notice the road by which he had come, or the house at which he had arrived. Only there recurred to him, as it were, a dim and distant memory of Syms, the intolerable ass who had ensnared him, through atrocious boredom to a deadly feast, compared with which the fellow in Virgil had enjoyed a Lord Mayor's banquet. And then—yes—the same Syms, disgustingly hearty, had got out a ramshackle trap and driven him shakily up precipitous hills and over impossibly rough moorland roads, and set him down at an iron gate at the entrance to a drive, dismally darkened by an avenue of gigantic

ash-trees. Here memory's vision brightened, and the dyspeptic became a man. For in the garden, beyond a blaze of scarlet tulips and blue hyacinths, upon a green lawn shaded by an ancient thorn-tree, he had seen and wondered at a girl, fair-haired, blue-eyed, her red lips parted in an ecstasy of delight as she gazed at the sunset glow upon the mountains, her lovely form outlined against the dark shadow of a gigantic yew-tree, her buckler breasts leaping to the call of the spring.

He remembered how he had crept straight to bed, sick, and a mere Secretary. But, with the recollection of that vision, he rose, eager and a man.

He dressed and hurried down. There were few signs of breakfast in the dining-room. But from the drawing-room came the sound of music, and of one singing.

He entered noiselessly. Yes, there was the vision of yester-eve. Corah Nailes sat at the piano.

She was singing Brahms' *Cradle Song*. There was an extraordinary caress in her voice, a beautiful tenderness that spoke at once to a deep purity of soul and an immense possibility of unawakened passion.

"And yet," said Leigh, as the song sank into silence, "and yet they tell one that there are no nightingales north of the Trent!"

He was inclined to plume himself on the phrase. But the singer chilled the temperature of the compliment by closing the piano. Then she turned, politely smiling, and asked if he had recovered from his indisposition.

He thanked her, yes, and begged her to continue singing. But she rose, conclusively, and guessed that

breakfast was overdue, and that Dad would ring her down if she was not right there with the toasties.

Leigh was taken aback by the contrast between the refinement of her singing and the Western breadth of her conversation. But if he was taken aback, he was at the same time uneasily conscious that he had been taken down, at least one peg.

Miss Nailes led the way to the dining-room. There they found her father in a fever of impatience.

"It's ha'f after nine," he exclaimed, irritably, "and nary sign of a toastie!"

"I wouldn't worry, Dad," returned Corah, coolly; "the mail is never in till ten."

She spoke with perfect good temper, but with a curious undertone of defiance and contempt. It struck Leigh as an accustomed tone, deliberately calculated to keep at arm's length a man who was eager to tyrannize and to scold. Nailes was painted at once as a financier whose daily life could not, avowedly, begin before his letters arrived, and who had therefore less than no right to grumble at the clock, till then. Leigh dropped another peg in his own estimation as he realized that he himself had just been suppressed in the same unanswerable manner.

Nailes ate his way through an omelette in the same rapid and ferocious manner as he had dealt with his boiled chicken in Chancery Lane. Leigh was still looking vaguely and vainly for marmalade, when the financier rose, poured out a glass of cold water at the sideboard, drank it, and told his Secretary that he would be ready in the library in five minutes.

Corah Nailes smiled at the obvious dismay of the Englishman. "I guess you think it is early to

commence," she said. "But Dad's all business now, as he always has been." And she added in a tone in which admiration and contempt were strangely blended, "Dad's a driver, you bet!"

"Guess that's so," returned Nailes, his hand on the door. "The doctors said I was to have a real rest vacation, and to get back to Nature. Wa'al, I doan' know. I despise Nature, though Corah here thinks it's fine. *My* nature is to make dollars, and I guess I shall always be getting back to that."

"You've got to quit working by twelve o'clock," said his daughter, authoritatively. "And then Mr. Leigh and I will take your letters and cables down to Harkerseat."

Leigh smiled gratefully, but to a blank wall. Two hours later when he emerged through the French windows of the library, his hands and pockets filled with letters and telegrams, he found the tall and beautiful girl, of whom he had been thinking all through the weary business of writing incomprehensible instructions to innumerable brokers, waiting for him upon the lawn, intently occupied in endeavouring to coax some snow-white pigeons to feed from her hands.

"My, ain't they cunning?" she exclaimed. "Do you think they will ever come and feed out of my hands and sit on my shoulders as the pigeons used to do at Venice, in the Piasser of St. Marks?"

"I am sure they will, if they have any sense."

"And if they haven't?"

"Just starve them for a day, and they will be as tame as mutton to-morrow."

She looked up quickly at the omniscient youth by her side.

"Is that so?"

"Unless they are too well bred. Some pigeons I know are so proud and so aristocratic that they tumble over and upset themselves on the least provocation—such as the sight of food."

"I guess pride is always stupid," Corah mused, "whether it is pride of birth, or pride of dollars, or pride of brains."

"I expect we are all proud and all stupid about some things."

"Yes," she continued, "there's Dad, there. He was born in a little two-storied, white-painted farm house. But he's as proud as a lord of his dollars and his brains, and as stupid as a cock-roach about everything else."

"And you?" Leigh queried. "I can't think you are either proud or stupid."

"Yes, I am," she retorted petulantly; "perhaps I am stupid because I am not proud of Dad . . ."

She flushed when she had said it. And Leigh smiled, for already he had succeeded in getting her to talk about her intimate self. He had the sense to refrain from pressing the subject further.

They passed in silence down the drive. Through the immense overshadowing grove of bare ash-trees, the hard sunlight of an April morning threw patches of light and shadow on their path, and lit up, here and there, the nodding heads of golden daffodils in the spare grass.

They emerged on to a rough mountain road, which zig-zagged ahead of them, up and down precipitous

pitches and round violent corners. On either side stretched rough moorland dotted with heather and sheep-cropped juniper. Here and there, the line was broken by a swamp half-hidden by wine-red patches of bog-myrtle and bilberries and bog-bean; and here and there, by a plantation of larches, drawn like a scarf of emerald across the moor. Below them in the valley lay Leva's Water, hard and blue beneath a cold April sky, and, away to the left, the blue bays of Windermere between the larch-clad cop of Latterbarrow. Leigh looked at his companion.

"Isn't it wonderful?" he murmured.

"Yes," she said earnestly. "This view just tickles me to death. But there's an outlook from the moor here, that's the dandiest thing I know."

She led the way from the road through an iron fence, and advancing a few yards in the opposite direction from the way they had been going, stopped, and pointed towards the Langdale Pikes. A semicircle of mountains lay before them, capped with snow. The Old Man and Wetherlam, on their left, were linked to the Crinkle Crags bending outwards to Bowfell, which was shrouded in a hail-storm. Great Gable, gleaming in sunshine, and the Pikes, lying like twin Sphinxes, brought the circumference round to Fairfield. Everywhere in the valleys wild cherry-trees, laden with blossom, echoed the note of snow upon the hill-tops. In the near foreground, the lower fells, Lingmoor, and Oxenfell, and Loughrigg, were brilliant in the tints of bracken-rust, brown heather, and emerald junipers.

"Like the underwing of a butterfly," Leigh exclaimed, in admiration of the colour-scheme.

"Yep," Corah assented. "It's verra neat. But it's up to us to catch the mail, or Dad will pick on us fit to bust. Dad's always wound up."

Leigh started and shivered. They regained the road and plunged rapidly down towards the old town below them.

"It's almost as rough as some of our roads out West," Corah observed. "But they are new, and this, they say, is the old pack-horse track by which they used to bring the iron ore from Furness. It was built by the Romans, when they held the country with their port at Ravenglass, their camps at Hardknott, and Ambleside, and their road along High Street above Windermere yonder."

"Really?" replied Leigh. He was annoyed to find himself being taught by this raw American girl who could yet describe the scene they had just gazed upon as "neat." She caused, indeed, in his mind, a jumble of sensations, of attraction and repulsion, of admiration and disapproval, of surprise and disappointment, highly disconcerting to a young Oxonian.

A sudden gust of biting cold wind, heralding the hail-storm they had seen driving across Bowfell like a shroud let down from Heaven, struck and buffeted them.

"The air bites shrewdly," said Leigh, as he drew his Burberry closer about him.

Corah smiled. "It is a nipping and an eager air." She completed the quotation, and once again Leigh started. For how could a raw American girl, who had described that outlook as "dandy," possibly have been expected to complete a quotation from Hamlet?

The hail-storm rushed up from the mountains, whitening the moors as it sped, and lashing the wind-driven thorn-trees and larches in its course.

"We had better take shelter underneath this hedge," said Leigh. "I don't expect this storm will last long. There's sunshine behind, and this hail will cut you to ribbons."

He plunged into a ditch topped with wild cherry and palm-willow and hawthorn and dead bramble, half dragging his companion after him. They crouched in the dyke seeking shelter, whilst the hail drove over them rattling on their hats and Burberrys, and whipping their faces like a lash, whenever they ventured for a moment to turn them to windward.

The dainty white flowers of wood-sorrel, and the blue bells of wild hyacinths formed a carpet for their feet.

Now it chanced that at this very time, the wife of John Jackson of Mickle Lonethwaite farm was expecting to add yet one more red-headed, blue-eyed urchin to the growing circle of lads and lassikins, whose presence had done so much to dispel the dreariness of the desolate moor of Lonethwaite. Desolate indeed it was. When first Kate Atkinson had left her home near Harkerseat to join her life to John Jackson, the sturdy farmer of Mickle Lonethwaite, the remoteness of that lonely spot which she was henceforth to call home, had appalled her. In the winter she had never a soul to speak to. In the summer, a lost tourist would occasionally happen on the little farm, snugly hidden beneath a crag amidst the bracken, and ask his way and beg for a glass of milk. But year by year there had come a la'al John, or a la'al Kate, and

a la'al Beatrice and a la'al James to banish loneliness and to dispute the claims of hens and cattle and sheep as company. And, for her eyes were always turned with a certain pride of birth to that "heart of the world" whence she had sprung, some five miles away, she had always insisted that her bairns should be helped into the world by "t' auld Doctor of Harkerseat and nobbut him." That, indeed, was an article of faith with all the folk of Harkerseat. And since women are "parlish kittle cattle," and at certain times it behoves a man to treat their unaccountable humours as though they were the last word in reason, sturdy John Jackson (after saving his manhood by pointing out that auld Dame Seathwaite of Langly Farm, nobbut three miles away, was a rare hand as a midwife) was wont to ride over, year by year, first to warn, and then to summon to her aid, the eccentric, beloved old Doctor Merriman of Harkerseat. This year, too, he had warned him, and this day, too, he had ridden over to summon him.

But it chanced that the old doctor had, as we know, caught no fish the day before. And in the evening, after he had cooked himself a bowl of porridge, he had thought long and deeply over the reasons of his failure, and had analyzed the causes. Before he turned in, he had devised a new lure which, the more he thought of it overnight in bed, and the more he thought of it in bed in the morning, seemed certain to overcome the indifference of the most conceited, overfed pike in Leva's water.

He had dealt with the few patients who awaited him at his dispensary in the little market town, and had mixed some disgusting draughts for them, with

an impatience which he did not attempt to disguise, but for which he took no fee. Then, seizing on the youngest of them, a lad who had but just recovered from rheumatic fever, he had led him down to the lake, and, explaining to him that fresh air was the best medicine, had enlisted his services for the day as ghillie, on the understanding that he should have sixpence if they caught fish, and no black draught, even if they didn't.

He had scarcely been fishing for half an hour, when John Jackson, sitting heavily astride on a heavy farm-horse, appeared on the road by the lake shore.

"Heigh, Doctor!" he bellowed. The boat was close in shore, but the farmer roared as if he were calling to a dog working sheep on the fellside half a mile away. That is the habit of shepherds. "Doctor Merriman, I'se coom for thee."

The old angler—and all anglers, young or old, will sympathize with him—took no notice. If his beard twitched, I know not. But the lad who was ghillying for him avers that the old doctor took no notice, though John Jackson roared and roared again, "Doctor Merriman, I'se coom for thee."

Doctor Merriman finished the drift. And then, as the boat was turned to try another beat, he found time to look up and answer.

"Can't you see I'm fishing?" he shouted back.

"Nay, but t' Missis canna' wait for thee and thy fish," bellowed the indignant farmer.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Hasta forgotten? She's expecting t' fifth, and thar's nae time tae wa-aste."

"Waste!" retorted the doctor, indignantly. "Can't

you see I'm *fishing*?" and he murmured under his breath, "Fifth. Then she'll do well enough."

"Nay, doctor," said the farmer, nonplussed and reduced to wheedling. "But I'se gi'en thee fair warning weeks sin', and thou hast allus coomed to my Ka-ate."

There was no tenderer-hearted man in Lancashire or Westmorland than Doctor Merriman. But, as fate would have it, at that moment, and just as he began to raise his rod, he hooked a heavy fish.

The farmer watched him play it in silence, and when it was safely landed in the boat, he called out—

"Noo, doctor, thou'lt surely be coming noo."

"Coming?" cried Merriman, flushed with the excitement of his capture, and the vision of a great day's sport, the triumph of his new lure. "Come? How can I come? Can't you see I'm *fishing*?"

"But what aba-a-t my Ka-ate?" bellowed John, half distraught.

"Nay, thy Kate 'll do fine, doctor or no doctor—and anyway thou canst ca' my lad, Syms."

The farmer waited, hopelessly, for ten minutes, whilst the old angler trolled down the reeds, and then tried a new drift further away. Head bent, he turned his horse towards the town, to summon Lancaster Syms to his assistance, well knowing that Kate would never forgive him.

Syms was out. But no sooner did he return than he set forth again, on hearing the urgent message which John Jackson had left.

And so it came about that he was mounting the road towards Langdale at the very hour when Leigh and Corah Nailes were descending it.

It was very hard on John Jackson and his missis. For Syms met, face to face, the selfsame storm of hail which had driven Leigh and Corah Nailes to shelter. And, it so happened, that he himself took refuge underneath the selfsame hedge, but on the other side. There he crouched too, in silence, weathering the passing storm, for it was impossible to advance against that driving blizzard. And whilst he waited, fuming with impatience and shrinking beneath the lashing hail, a mistle-thrush in the hedge burst forth into song, striving to outsing the storm, as thrushes will in April, when rain brings with it the hope of worms. To Syms, at the moment, such joyous song seemed a veritable insult, for he was cut to the quick by the cold shower and bleak wind.

"Ah," he exclaimed aloud, "you may well sing, you damned little bird! But what about me, and what about Mrs. Jackson?"

To his horror, he was answered by a burst of silvery laughter, almost in his ear. He started up, and again, from the other side of the hedge, that silvery peal of joyous laughter rang out. He was horror-struck and ashamed that his absurd interjection had been overheard. But even before he had discovered the owner of that laugh, he was in love, and he knew it. Love at first sight is a thing we most of us have experienced. Lancaster Syms, without seeing, was in love at first sound.

And perhaps that was not altogether foolish. For there is no surer index of a sane mind in a sane body than the joyous, musical laugh which springs straight from the heart. And when, leaping through the hedge, he had floundered into the presence of Corah Nailes

and Bertram Leigh, and stood there gasping, laughing, stammering apologies, sight confirmed and intensified the verdict of the ear. And Corah, laughing too, and brushing the raindrops from the fair locks that shaded her brow, by the time she had been introduced to this strong, clean man with the bronzed cheeks and dancing blue eyes, and had heard his apologies, was aware of a sense of kinship with him.

"I could make a friend of that man," she said to Leigh, half-speaking to herself, as they pursued their way, in sunshine now, towards the village. "He's straight."

"Oh yes," replied Leigh, patronizingly depreciatory, "Syms is all right. He's a good-natured sort of fool."

A jay in a neighbouring copse caught sight of them as he spoke, and flew away, a streak of blue, uttering a harsh, jarring cackle. It sounded to Corah like an echo of her companion.

"I guess that bird has a grouch against some one," she said; and added defiantly, "I wouldn't give a ten-spot for a millionaire who isn't straight, would you?"

Leigh, remembering many things, stared at her. "I don't know what a ten-spot is," he said lightly.

"Ten dollars." She shivered and drew her scarf closer round her throat. "Gee! but it's cold. I'm glad I brought this dinky little wisp of fur along."

They had reached the entrance to the old market town. A narrow winding street, cramped by white and yellow rough-cast houses set at odd angles, with overhanging stories supported by ancient white-washed beams, opened into a tiny market-place, paved

with rough cobble-stones. Here and there, not at right angles or at obvious corners, but exactly as the mood seized them, low archways opened the way from the market-place into narrow twisting streets, or large open yards, round which were grouped old, low houses, with stone, creeper-clad porches, and stone, outside staircases guarded by iron railings. Some of these houses had wooden galleries or pent-houses built along their fronts, which had been used for drying garn (or yarn, as we say in Southron speech), in the bygone days of weaving and spinning. Beneath the deeply recessed lower stories the spun wool used to be exposed for sale on market days. A purling beck, crossed by small foot-bridges, ran gaily through the centre of the little hillside town and its market-place, a vision of delight to artists, and a nightmare of impropriety to the half-baked enthusiasts of the new science of hygiene.

"Gee!" cried Corah. "Ain't it old-time?"

Her face flushed with delight and the strangeness of it all. She seized her companion's arm in her excitement. Leigh flushed too, thrilled by her touch, as she pointed to the top of the market-place. Outside a cobbler's shop a burly farmer, seated in a chair, was being shaved. A group of men stood about him, talking and laughing, and waiting their turn.

They advanced to investigate. They found that the cobbler's shop, a tiny room in a tiny cottage, was filled with nails and leather and heavy brass-toed clogs. A few razors and some bottles of hair-restorer explained to them that the cobbler was also the barber, and that his shop being full of boots, and shaving being a social event, it suited the world of

Harkerseat to be shaved in the open air, where there was room to pass the time of day.

As they stood exploring the mysteries of the cobbler's shop, a little girl descended from the upper room by a wooden ladder.

"Thou'lt be wanting to see t' girt clog?" she said, addressing Corah.

Corah, taken aback, relapsed upon American. "Yes? Not!"

But Leigh came to the rescue, and explained that that *was* the object of their visit.

"I'll joost tell mither, and then," the lassikin replied, and disappeared up the ladder.

Presently down the ladder came an elderly woman, who explained that she was Mrs. Tyson. Twopence was extracted from their not unwilling pockets, and then Mrs. Tyson, with the air of a high-priestess of the Mysteries, unlocked a cabinet and produced a gigantic clog, a clog such as the feet of two men, as men now are, might comfortably lose themselves in. It was nearly two feet in length, and some eight inches broad.

"Did ye ivver see owt like that afoor?" she asked, anticipating triumph.

"Nay," said Leigh, desperately endeavouring dialect.

"Nay, I should say not, awivver," replied the old lady, highly pleased.

"But was it ever worn?" asked Corah.

"It was made by my ain gran'father for Miles Hewertson, t' molecatcher," Mrs. Tyson replied, and added reflectively, "That wud be about t' time that William o' Normandy crossed t' road, I reckon."

"My, ain't it primitive?" exclaimed Corah, as they emerged from the cobbler's shop. "But, say, we can't ever send Dad's cables from here. Dad *will* be peeved."

They entered the post-office. It was a neat little shop, and the counters were crowded with photographs, and pencils, and bull's-eyes, and walking-sticks, and boxes of kippered herrings.

"Dad'll be crazy," was Corah's verdict. "We can't ever send cables from here."

But a pretty, pleasant-spoken, rosy-cheeked woman soon reassured her. Cables were as easy as posting a letter. Corah selected some photographs whilst Leigh sent off his telegrams and cables.

"I suppose you cannot tell us the correct time?" asked Corah as she was leaving, thinking that she had put her question in a very English way.

"Yes, Miss," was the reply. "Do you want it by the day or by the hour?"

For once our heiress of the Western World was taken aback. Leigh chuckled audibly in the background.

"By Greenwich time it is five minutes to one; but by our time it is one o'clock," the postmistress explained demurely. "We always keep five minutes ahead of time here."

Corah murmured her thanks. In the street she turned upon Leigh.

"Why didn't you help me out?" she demanded fiercely. Leigh laughed. "Just like that old jay," she thought. "I wish Dr. Syms had been with us, and then I shouldn't have made such a break."

CHAPTER IV

GLIMPSES OF THE CLOVEN HOOF

IT was mid-May. But next morning was typical English April. Small white clouds raced across the azure sky. A brief shower had sped. Lambs frisked in the sunshine on the green fields of the farm below. The daffodils in Corah's garden were smiling through their tears.

"Dad!" cried Corah, when her father and his Secretary rose next morning from breakfast. "I'm just crazed about this country."

"You don't tell me!" sneered her father. "I don't say it's not rather a pleasant country section, but it's cold and lonesome, to my thinking."

"I guess Dad's not acclimated yet," Corah observed apologetically to Leigh. "When he is, he'll size it up differently. He'll reckon you can't be lonesome with these lakes and mountains around."

"If you want mountains, you can see considerable more of the same thing out West," snapped Nailes.

"If it comes to that, you can see considerable more Ammurrican rails there too," said Corah, quickly.

To the astonishment and no small embarrassment of Leigh, the retort, uttered as it was with an air of

innocent lightness, goaded Nailes to fury. He stood speechless and stammering, the veins of his forehead swelling as if they would burst, his eyes starting from their sockets, his hands flung above his head, clenching and unclenching. At last he found speech.

"You're your mother's daughter, every inch of you," he hissed.

It was Corah's turn to be stung to rage. But she showed it differently. She turned white to the lips, but retained her self-control, as one who has been long schooled. A tremor in her voice betrayed the strain of her effort, as she said, with that same deadly contempt which Leigh had already experienced—

"The fool ass! I knew he would say just that. Why can't you quit picking on Momma and me, Dad?"

Nailes, the man whom the world judged impervious to the emotions of sentiment or passion, proclaimed his kinship with the weaker members of his sex by flinging out of the room, and banging the door.

Leigh had already become aware of a deadly antagonism between father and daughter. The mention of her mother at once gave him a clue, and balked his understanding. Left alone with Corah, he looked to her for a sign. She turned to him, still white to the lips.

"I guess Dad will be wanting you," she said. "I'm glad I'm not a bull to-day, if he's a bear."

For two hours or so, Leigh sat and wrote, whilst Phineas T. Nailes dictated instructions to a score of stock-jobbers, in a dozen different names. Some were ordered to buy, some to sell stock to the value of hundreds of thousands of dollars. That much, of

course, he gathered. But when, with a sheaf of letters and telegrams, he joined Miss Nailes in the garden, and she asked him—

“Wa-all, is he a bear?” he could only confess his ignorance. “For the Stock Exchange I really could not say. For you——”

“Oh, never mind me,” she cut in quickly. “It doesn’t matter—it’s only me.” She hummed the refrain of a music-hall song.

And so they set out to repeat their walk to the village post-office.

Leigh’s brain was in a turmoil. Since that scene at breakfast he had begun to perceive several things. Most vividly he was realizing, since Corah had directed his attention to it, that his employer, who was supposed to be indulging in a rest cure, was manœuvring a vast operation in American rails, on the English and American Stock Exchanges, the purport of which was totally incomprehensible to him. And he perceived that, if only he could understand that purport, the opportunity of making a fortune, which had enticed him, was already at hand. He did not know, yet, that Nailes’ reputation for being one of the most unscrupulous and inscrutable speculators on record was wholly deserved.

His disposition was for silent intrigue, and his practice was to operate on his own account without admitting any other person into his confidence. Secretiveness as to his investments and intentions was the keynote of his movements. His delight was to lay subtle and elaborate plans, and to carry them through, to his own immense profit, with an utter indifference to the feelings and comments of others.

Leigh did not know, yet, that it was said of Nailes, as of another great Spider of Finance, that he never seemed satisfied, except when deceiving every one as to his intentions. To buy heavily when he had arranged with his own partners to "go short" on a particular stock; to go short when he had agreed with them to buy—this had been a commonplace in his successful career.

And it was not probable that he was going to take into his confidence the young Secretary, whose character he had from the first summed up with such cynical frankness, and to whose opposition he owed one of the most disastrous set-backs in his career. But, already intoxicated by the dealings in hundreds of thousands of dollars, in which he was taking this subsidiary part, Leigh had begun to indulge in delicious dreams of untold gold which might be his for the trouble of divining his employer's secret, and following his lead.

Other things emerged more clearly to his by no means obtuse intellect. For instance, the beautiful, self-controlled woman, with the clear brain and keen emotions, at his side, was the heiress of this inscrutable financier, daughter and heiress indeed, but at daggers half-drawn with her father. Why?

The air of mystery which began to surround both Corah and his employer in his eyes, increased his interest in his companion. Her attitude towards her father, so obviously did she lack any respect or affection for him, had at first jarred upon him. But he felt sure, now, that Nailes had done something to forfeit her devotion, and that her defiant and contemptuous manner was the necessary weapon with

which she saved herself from being bullied by him. And as for Nailes, if he interpreted that scene at breakfast and his looks aright, he both hated and feared, whilst he admired her. Why? What was the story of her mother?

These questions and reflections formed themselves rapidly in his swift and searching mind. But obviously he could not broach the subject now. To break the silence he relapsed upon the scenery.

"I am so glad you like this country," he said. "It is beautiful, is it not?"

"I adore it. And we owe it all to Wordsworth."

"Oh, not quite."

"Yes, quite. We Americans do, I mean. If it had not been for him," she continued dreamily, "who of us would have come to see these old gray cottages and smooth kempt hills? Or, if we had come, who of us would have seen them? I don't think England knows how much she owes to William Wordsworth. He just epitomises in his verses all the simple homeliness that is England's greatest charm, and which tugs at one's heart-strings like an old, sweet song. My mother was a Puritan of Pennsylvania, my father—well, you see. But there is a pull here in this country of Wordsworth, Shakespeare, and Thomas Hardy, which is precisely like the call of a tender mother to a child. I can't resist it. I love it; and yet I am not English, but radically American."

"Well, I must read old Wordy Willy again," said Leigh. "I confess I used to think him rather an old gas-bag, but I expect I should see more in him now. Will you teach me?"

Corah flushed, but with pleasure. "Oh, I couldn't

ever start in to teach you. But I will show you the pieces that appeal to me."

"You spoke of your mother," said Leigh, after a short silence. "Has she been long dead?"

"My mother is alive," the girl answered slowly. "She left my father because he was very cruel to her. That is all that I can tell you."

Leigh winced. "I am sorry if I have pained you," he replied. "It was not altogether idle curiosity, I assure you." He said no more, partly out of consideration for her, partly because he was a little shocked at the revelation. He had no objection to a motherless girl. On the contrary. But if he was going to marry, he would have preferred his mother-in-law to be correctly dead. They had reached the village as they talked, and Corah, clapping her hands, ran to look at some hats exposed for sale in a little window, half-hidden by some bottles of sweets.

"Oh, my!" she cried, laughing gaily, "see here! Do you see the ticket on those guy hats?"

Leigh read it gravely. "*The Latest. All chick.*"

Corah's eyes were now dancing with delight. The cloud that had cast its shadow on her countenance was already forgotten. Trouble passed from her thoughts as ripples vanish from the surface of a tarn when the wind drops. She became again a light-hearted child, and ran delightedly from one source of interest and amusement to another. Leigh watched her with the pleasure that always comes to a man when he beholds a young girl filled with the freshness, vitality, and insouciance of Spring.

The next shop, half hidden beneath the timbers of an overhanging upper story, was a pastrycook's.

And here was another card in the window, announcing that the famous "wiggs" of Harkerseat were sold here.

"And see here!" cried Corah, laughing aloud, "the pastrycook sells wigs! Ain't it fetching?"

At this moment Lancaster Syms approached, and, after greeting them, politely hoped that Miss Nailes was none the worse for yesterday's shower. Corah thanked him, and presently observed, "I guess you haven't got any trades-unions around here, Doctor."

"Why not?"

"Why, they sell fish at the post-office, your cobbler cuts your hair, you buy bonnets at the candy-store, wigs at the pastrycook's, and—and——"

"And your baby-linen at the Bank!" suggested Leigh, pointing to a tiny haberdasher's shop, half of which proclaimed itself to be a bank on Saturdays.

"Yes, that is so," Syms answered, laughing. "Everybody here turns to as they think fit. You can add that the ironmonger is the newspaper-agent. The result is that none of us are very rich, and none of us are very poor; but we're friendly and contented—and perhaps we shouldn't be any more friendly or more contented if every man was confined to one job and told to do it slowly."

"It's a cute little town, anyway," said Corah. "But wigs at the pastrycook's—that beats the band."

"It's wiggs with two 'g's, you see," said Syms. "Wiggs are a special kind of bun made with carraway seeds."

"Ah," replied Corah, reflectively. "You don't say. Now isn't that upsetting? Here have I been laughing at Harkerseat, and this is the second time Harkerseat has had the laugh of me."

Just then their attention was distracted by a great commotion and shouts of laughter at the head of the square. For it chanced that La'al John, the son of John Torver, a neighbouring farmer, had played truant from school that morning, and had been bird's-nesting among the hazel-copses on the other side of the lake. He was celebrating his return in high spirits, by playing at "Narky," and "Shepherd's coomin' to gie warnin'," and other games of the sort, with some chosen comrades in the market-square. The games were of the nature of "Touched last" and "Prisoner's base," and involved much running about and diving behind the ample forms of the farmers, who stood gossiping, before or after the morning glass of ale, and waiting their turn to be shaved by James Tyson, the cobbler-barber.

Now, as bad fortune would have it, La'al John, hard-pressed, escaped from his pursuer by swiftly doubling round old Dr. Merriman. He did not know that the doctor had been watching him as a cat watches a pigeon. The doctor did not know that La'al John had been bird's-nesting. Otherwise the one would never have come within reach, and the other would never have pounced. As it was, the doctor's hand suddenly grabbed at the lad's head, and landed heavily on the top of his hat, in which, of course, his bird's eggs were all concealed.

A shout of applause went up in praise of the doctor's quickness, followed by a louder roar of merriment, as the broken eggs began to trickle down the frightened face of La'al John.

"Eh, lad," exclaimed Dr. Merriman, "yon's a pretty mess! Eggs are kittlish goods to carry in thy

bonnet. Thou sud'st hev warned me that thou hadst been bird's-nesting. But as it is, we'll have a look at yon tooth that was troubling thee."

He drew a forceps from his pocket, and pushing the boy firmly, but not unkindly, against the wall of a house, placed his knee against his chest to hold him in position, and looked into his mouth.

"Was this t'yan?" he asked. The lad gurgled. In a trice the forceps had done its work.

"Eh, but yon was a gey fine do!" exclaimed one of the crowd of admiring farmers, who had pressed round to see the operation.

"Cooms o' practice, like," said another.

"Hoo's that?" queried a third.

"Doctor's allus at it—disgorging bait fra' t' pike," was the rejoinder.

Dr. Merriman was gazing critically at the tooth he had extracted. He appeared dissatisfied, and shook his head.

"Here, lad," he said, holding out the tooth to the howling urchin. "Thou'lt be wanting thy tooth, I reckon, as a keepsake?"

The boy stopped crying, and advanced to receive the badge of his heroism. "It's t' wrang yan, awivver," said the doctor, seizing the unsuspecting youth again, as he came within reach. "Sae we mun just try again, and then."

A piercing yell rang through the yards of Harkerseat, followed by yet another. The doctor, flushed and triumphant, held a second tooth in his forceps, whilst the crowd gathered round, laughing and applauding his skill.

But La'al John had fled, screaming over the brae,

and never heeding the cry of the tempters who summoned him to receive his second trophy.

Dr. Merriman now caught sight of Leigh, and advanced to greet him. He was introduced to Miss Nailes.

"I hope thou's better of thy chill, lad?" he said to Leigh, genially.

"I don't know that I had a chill," Leigh returned sourly, the recollection of his meal weighing sore upon him.

"Oh, it must have been a chill," the doctor urged, "You take my tip, it must have been a chill. It couldn't have been the brandy, sista, for I'll swear I had only pickled *one* bird in it, and that not more than a week gone Tuesday."

"A chill it was, then," said Leigh, thawed by the kindly earnestness of the doctor's manner rather than by his matter. "Anyway, it did no harm."

"We must have another day on the lake soon," Dr. Merriman pursued with an air of relief. "And perhaps Miss Nailes will come too? We'll show you some gey fine sport yet. I have got a new bait which is an absolute certainty for pike."

Corah said she would be delighted, and they moved away, for the luncheon hour was almost come. Dr. Merriman watched them critically, as they went.

"A bonny lassie, surely," he said, turning to Lancaster Syms, who stood watching the pair intently. "So that is Nailes' daughter, is it?"

Syms nodded.

"And your friend is his Secretary?"

Syms nodded again.

"I'm thinking," pursued the doctor, "that, if she

was my lass, I wouldn't let her walk all day and every day with a handsome young fellow like that."

Syms snorted indignantly.

"And if I did, I should know what would happen. Nailes is not a fool, whatever else he is. Now, why do you think that a man like him is throwing his daughter at that young man's head?"

Syms stamped impatiently. "How do I know, or care?" he said, turning away.

The old doctor laid his hand on the arm of his assistant.

"Nay, lad," he said, "you ought to care. There's nothing in the world so interesting, and instructive, too, for a young doctor, as the study of men and women in all their phases, actions, ways, and motives. Unless" he added reflectively, as he turned towards the lake, "unless, m'appen, the ways of fish. There's an old trout in t' dub* yonder, that laughs at every lure. Now, I wonder, I wonder——"

And so wondering, he wandered off, leaving Syms laughing aloud, and, in the silence of his heart, burning with a new passion—helpless, irrational jealousy.

* Pond.

CHAPTER V

A JUBILEE MEMORIAL

SOCIETY at Harkerseat consisted of the inmates of a few country houses dotted round the lake. At the period of which I am writing, these inhabitants were for the most part middle-aged. Some were rich, and some were just comfortably off; some were newcomers, attracted by the beauty and repose of the spot; and some were descendants of old "statesmen," yeomen who held their "states" from generation to generation by Border tenant right; and some were offshoots of old county families, rooted to the soil.

In the absence of any young people to shake them up, which is the function of young people, each of these families tended year by year to settle down to live its own life and develop its own idiosyncrasies. In so doing they furnished each other with plentiful subjects of conversation. Being few, they were surprisingly sociable, and there was something of old-time hospitality in their relations with one another. Being scattered, they were largely self-supporting. Their farms, their gardens, and household management kept them busy—self-consciously and happily busy, as only people who live in the country are.

But they all dined regularly at one another's

houses; they all attended punctiliously one another's "at homes," they all discussed with fervour and acumen one another's gardens. And, the ladies at least, all criticised or admired one another's new hats and new frocks. Once a week they sallied forth after dinner, armed with lanterns and heavily wrapped up in waterproofs, to play whist at one house or another in turn.

In a society so small and united, the advent of residents in a house which had long stood empty, was a matter of no small importance. The ladies met in solemn conclave at the seat of the leading millionaire of the district, and discussed the pressing problem of the day. To call or not to call, that was the question.

Mrs. Butt was a lively, handsome, managing woman. Her husband owned half the gin palaces in Liverpool. She was very anxious to ignore the fact, without foregoing the dividends. She patronized her poorer neighbours, but not outrageously.

She began the discussion by asking Mrs. Derrydoe whether she intended to call on these new people. Mrs. Derrydoe replied, timidly and tactfully, that they had not decided yet. Her answer concealed the brutal fact, already perfectly well known to her listeners, that her husband, a retired Naval officer of rough and eccentric manners, had loudly announced his intention of throwing her into the lake, if she dared to call upon those horrible Yankees.

Mrs. Cunsey, however, observed that she was rather thinking of doing so. Mrs. Cunsey always opposed or contradicted whatever Mrs. Derrydoe might say. Herself a hale old lady of over eighty, lively as a cricket and of indomitable courage, she

despised the lack of nerve and vitality displayed by the other in her meek subjection to her domineering captain.

"If that old buccaneer were my husband," she used to exclaim, shaking her stick, "I would soon teach him to bully me. . . . But you have no spirit my dear, no spirit." She was not lacking in spirit herself. About her there still clung the glamour of an old romance and the expectation of a new one. With the wider charity which comes to lively minds as years increase, she had outgrown the traditional attitude of the dale towards all strangers. She remembered the time when even the inhabitants of neighbouring villages were regarded as foreigners, and were treated with but thinly veiled hostility; she remembered the days when it was considered downright wicked to speak of any foreign country except with loathing and contempt.

But she had seen the old county families dwindle and disappear, until there was but one left in the neighbourhood, the members of which were mainly absentees. Their places had been taken chiefly by a floating population of rich business folk. And Mrs. Cunsey, whilst holding herself superior to these by birth and ancient right of property, was not going to indulge her family pride to the extent of denying herself the amusement of their society. But if she recognized the Butts, she saw no reason for not recognizing the Nailes. Moreover she perceived that Mrs. Butt had determined to boycott the Americans, and she did not choose to allow her to lay down the social law in Harkerseat. She therefore repeated, with a slight challenge in her voice, that she was

rather thinking of calling on them—presently, you know.

Mrs. Butt hesitated. She had no son, and Corah's charms as an heiress did not therefore appeal to her. And Nailes' reputation for immense wealth exasperated rather than allured her. There was a danger that she might be outshone. She had intended to confirm Mrs. Derrydoe's hesitation by announcing that she did not feel attracted by what she had heard of these vulgar Americans. Mrs. Cunsey's declaration, however, caused her to move more warily.

"Is it worth while?" she asked. "Are they going to stay?"

"They have taken a lease of Gallowbarrow Lodge for two years," the old lady answered.

Mrs. Butt shifted her ground.

"But are they—er—I mean, are they all right?"

She emphasized the phrase with a suggestion that she doubted it.

"Yes," echoed Mrs. Derrydoe. "That's just it—are they?"

"They are rich as Croesus, and the girl looks charming," replied Mrs. Cunsey.

Mrs. Butt saw the pitfall, but she plunged into it with an assumption of innocent invulnerability that was truly magnificent.

"Rich," she scoffed. "Oh yes, rich as Croesus, no doubt. But *how* did they get their money?"

A less lively and combative intellect might have been flustered by the colossal impudence of the gin-distiller's consort. But in Mrs. Cunsey's eyes there was a glint of triumph, and in her voice a ring of challenge, as she answered—

"Railways, they tell me, American Rails. Not the *best London*, of course, my dear! But still rails. *They* are quite respectable, are they not?"

Mrs. Butt grew red. She knew, as well as Mrs. Derrydoe and the other ladies in the room, that Mrs. Cunsey always referred to Jeremiah Butt as "Old Tom." She knew, as well as they, that she could not afford any further references to that potent, profitable, but somewhat plebeian spirit. Like a wise woman, she accepted her defeat and spoke with her enemy at the gate.

"I bow to experience," she said, with a smile that was bitter-sweet. "I certainly gathered from Jeremiah that Nailes was generally regarded as rather shady in the financial world. Still, of course," she added, as she poured out tea from a florid silver teapot, "if *you* think they are all right—well, I am glad to have the responsibility taken off *my* shoulders. Do you take sugar, my dear Mrs. Cunsey?"

"No," said Mrs. Cunsey, firmly, as at that moment she would have said no to anything that Mrs. Butt had chosen to say. Every woman in the room knew that she always took two lumps—large ones. That was why she said No, quite firmly. There was a quite audible gasp of surprise. Then the conversation turned, almost feverishly, upon roses and little dogs.

Mrs. Cunsey listened amicably to Mrs. Derrydoe's lengthy anecdote concerning the devotion of her pet Skipperke. Then she herself launched forth into a yarn, the apparent innocence of which was truly amazing. A hedgehog, it seemed, had appeared upon her lawn. Once it had caught sight of her, nothing would induce it to leave her. It had followed her about the garden, gasping asthmatically.

"I offered it bread and milk, my dear," she said, rising dramatically, and drawing nearer to the tea-table. "I offered it water, I offered it tea. It wouldn't touch anything, but just followed me about, hissing and moaning. I couldn't imagine what it was it wanted. At last I thought of sugar, my dear." As she spoke, she took the silver tongs from the sugar bowl and, with one lump of sugar dramatically poised in the air, continued her touching tale. "I put one lump—like this—into the bread and milk. The dear little mite sniffed at it—tasted it—shook its head. It evidently wanted another. I took another, so"—the second lump entered her own cup of tea—"and, would you believe it, my dear? the funny little thing put out its tongue and lapped up the whole dish."

Mrs. Cunsey resumed her seat, thoughtfully stirring her sugared tea.

Whilst the social fate of the Nailes' was thus being sealed by the ladies of Harkerseat, a conclave of mere men was assembled in the town, whose deliberations concerned them no less. Not that they were the ostensible cause of it. The great minds of men do not so work—in public. The conclave had been summoned to meet at the vicarage, to discuss first high tea, and then the problem which at that time weighed heaviest on men's thoughts, How shall we most fitly commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria?

Jeremiah Butt of course was there, and Anthony Sharpasse, the local attorney, a thin, eager man, fond of all sports, who was always everywhere, and would have been quite genial, if his profession had been less forbidding, and his wife had been less hard-bitten.

Then there was Captain Derrydoe, invited out of deference to his uniform, which was held to bring him almost in touch with the throne. Always loyal, his loyalty was even terrifying when, as it was put, the liquor was in him. Thanks to him, the Queen's birthday had long been reckoned one of the most exciting days of the year at Harkerseat. For upon that day, the gallant Captain was wont to hoist upon his house an ancient tattered Naval Ensign and, himself arrayed in full uniform and followed by a crowd of admiring urchins, to march up and down from his house to the village, brandishing his sword and compelling all and sundry to come in and drink the Queen's health in champagne—and the highways and hedges, it was noticed, were more than usually crowded on the Queen's birthday. Not that much compulsion was needed. For himself, never, it was averred, had the sun gone down upon that day of days without the Captain's seeing two ensigns where, in the morning, but one had flown.

The opinion of so loyal a subject could not be overlooked in considering a matter of such high importance. Nor could one ignore the point of view, unexpected as it always was, of old John Rawlinson, a benign, white-bearded Quaker, the most silent of his sect, and the most blameless of men, whose immense reputation for wisdom had been acquired, partly by never giving advice, and partly by never taking it. It must be confessed that he was mean, terrible mean, men said. It was undeniable that he had ceased taking the *Yorkshire Post*, declaring that he could not afford it, as soon as he discovered that his cook subscribed to the *Daily News*, and he bethought

him that he could borrow it of her of an evening. So at least John Dugdale, a hale blithe farmer, the People's Churchwarden, used to say, and he said it in tones of admiration and awe, since he was accustomed to drive a hard bargain himself. He, too, had been summoned to the vicarage upon this great occasion.

Gone were the old days when it was no uncommon thing for a parson to add to his living of three or four pounds a year by keeping the village alehouse, and to regale with sermons on Sunday a congregation of customers whom he served with pint pots throughout the week. Services were no longer deferred indefinitely because "t' parson's best game hen had setten hersel' in t' pulpit;" and though wrestling remained as popular as ever, there was hardly a cleric living in the district who would, as of yore, try a fall with his parishioners in the churchyard, as they assembled for the service on Sunday.

The Rev. Tobias Stitch was a different type of clergyman from those full-blooded parsons of the olden times. I do not know that he was a better Christian. He held, quite honestly, the strange belief, that exactly 144,000 fortunate souls were, for no known reason, selected and sealed for eternal bliss hereafter, bliss taking the doubtful form of singing perpetual hymns with the angels. All the rest of mankind, who were not called and chosen, were doomed to eternal torment, however noble their lives, however saintly their characters. This doctrine, so appalling in itself and so disastrous in its corollaries, he preached year in, year out, to the bewildered villagers. The prospective sufferings in hell fire of

the rejected billions of his fellow-creatures constituted his main joy in life.

Next to that, came the felicity of pointing out the wickedness inherent in every amusement, however apparently innocent. The effect of his attitude was, quite unintentionally of course, somewhat demoralising. For if you tell a man who leads a blameless life, works hard all the week, and only indulges in a glass or two of good ale and a game of "whisk" on Saturdays, and an occasional dance at sheep-shearings or in the lang nights, that, by touching the accursed thing and fingering the Devil's picture-book, he has earned an exceptional roasting in the future world, he is apt, if he pays any attention to you, to confuse sober recreation with excess, and to act on the principle—in for a penny, in for a pound. Fortunately, not over much attention was paid to the Rev. Tobias Stitch. For his acid, interfering wife was so unpopular, that men discounted his uncharitable doctrines, compassionately supposing that she inspired his inhuman teaching, as she was known to write his incredible sermons.

Perhaps the only man in the valley who felt no compassion for him was Jeremiah Butt. On business grounds (and these inspired the strongest sensations of which he was capable) he disapproved of teetotallers. From the point of view of personal comfort, he objected to the vicar's high teas, from which he occasionally suffered, even more than he resented his hebdomadal blue-ribbon preachments. He bore with them, however, and was inclined to give himself some credit for his affability on such occasions.

The meal was over. Jeremiah, rubicund, genial

and heroic, opened the door for his departing hostess as gallantly as if he had seen a decanter of port upon the table. But Mrs. Stitch never missed an opportunity. She paused in the doorway, and spoke in piercing tones—

“I don’t know whether you noticed, Mr. Butt, there was no alcoholic liquor served at our table to-night? We don’t have it, on principle. We don’t consider it right. The example of Noah, you know——”

Jeremiah (Sherrybiah, his friends called him) was the last man in the world not to have noticed the omission. He had borne up manfully. But he was not ready of speech, and already he had begun to feel distinctly below par. And now insult, unexpected and undeserved, was being hurled at his injured—head, shall we say? He stood speechless, twisting the door handle, whilst his ruddy cheeks flushed vermillion.

It was then that Captain Derrydoe saved the situation. With a great bellow of laughter he roared from the opposite end of the room,

“Oh, ah, well, Mrs. Stitch! It doesn’t matter. Don’t apologize. I dare say it won’t do any of us any harm—for *once*, you know.”

“Apologize!” sniffed Mrs. Stitch, and left the room, defeated.

Genial, patronizing, sympathetic, wholly unconscious of the outraged feelings of his hosts, the gallant captain advanced towards the disconsolate Butt.

“I say, old feller,” he said, as he took a seat by his side, “that was pretty neat. I got you out of that hole all right, I think. That’s what we call *tact* in the Navy.”

To turn the subject, the Rev. Tobias Stitch promptly resolved the house into a committee.

"We are all agreed, I suppose," he said, "that we ought to express our loyal feelings as a community by erecting some memorial in honour of our beloved Sovereign's Diamond Jubilee?" There was a murmur of assent.

"The only question, then, is what form is our memorial to take?"

"Aye," said John Rawlinson, "it'll bide a bit o' thinkin' oot, will yon."

"T'udder timè," suggested John Dugdale, "it war a drinking fountain."

Sherrybiah hemmed loudly. He objected to drinking fountains on principle. Taking up his parable, he reminded honourable gentlemen that he had always objected to that form of memorial, but had been overruled. The beck ran clear through the town, and anybody who wanted water—if anybody did—could always help themselves from it. Moreover, need he remind them, as if to justify his opposition, the drinking fountain always went dry whenever there was a spell of hot weather, and thirsty tourists, after reading the inscription and pressing an irresponsive tap, were driven back to the beck or the public-house?

John Rawlinson admitted that it always gave him pain to read the inscription in dry weather. "He sendeth the springs from the hills." It seemed to be making a mock of the Almighty, whereas it was really the result of their own foolishness in not connecting the pipes with a reliable spring.

Captain Derrydoe observed that the question was, "What are we going to do?" not "What have we

done?" Whereupon the Vicar suggested a clock tower in the market place. Other towns had taken that line. There was one at Kendal, which played tunes. John Dugdale asked what was the use of a clock-tower when the church clock was good enough for them, and chimed, and all. The Vicar agreed that that was so.

"Besides," said the Quaker, "we should have to pay some one to wind it up and keep it in order afterwards."

The suggestion of a clock-tower was withdrawn.

"As a business man," said Butt, "I should say the way to look at it is this. First, how much money can we raise? and secondly, What do we most want?"

"We shall raise just about as much as we raised for the first Jubilee," said Sharpasse.

"As a community," Rawlinson said slowly, "I am not aware that we are in need of any material thing."

"Spiritual grace, of course," said the Vicar, quickly, with the air of a man whose monopoly is being assailed. "*That* we shall always need. But grace is not to be bought with pounds, shillings and pence. It is the free gift."

"Certainly, certainly, Vicar," said Mr. Sharpasse. "But the question is, what are we to do?"

There was a prolonged silence.

Butt suggested that a supper in the Institute and a big dance might serve the purpose. But the horror of the Vicar and the Quaker were too genuine to allow him to press his proposal. There was another long silence. It was broken at last by John Dugdale.

"We cooms back to whar us war afoor," he said. "Last Jubilee, we sits and sits, and racks oor brains, a-thinking what it was we lacked. At lang last, we

decides—a drinking fountain. Mainly, sithee, because they hae a gey fine trough at Loora. An' the lads o' Loora hev been laughing at oor fountain ever sin'. Noo, I've been turning t' matter ower in my mind, thinkin' and unbethinkin' mesel, and leukin' round, top an' sides, as ye med say, and I've mead oop my mind that thar's nobbut yan thing for 't."

"Well?" said Butt.

"We mun put oop anudder fountain facin' t' udder yan. That'll gie Jimmy Atkins, t' mason, a guid job, an' he's sair i' need o' yan, seein' they've joost had twins, and a'."

There was a murmur of applause.

"But you objected to a clock-tower," said the Vicar, "because you said there was no need of a second clock?"

"Why, a clock's a clock, and a trough's a trough, Vicar," replied Dugdale. "Besides, t' clock goes, t' fountain don't. An' anyways, there'll be nowt to pay for t' oopkeep."

"But what is the use of a drinking fountain?" repeated Butt, in utter disgust.

"Seeam as you used to say afoor, Mr. Butt," replied Dugdale. "To drink fra', says I. An' efter a', naebody's bound tae use 't. An' there's nowt to pay for t' oopkeep, an' Atkins wull be gey glad o' t' job—seein' they've joost had twins, an' a'."

"Twin fountains for twin bairns," Sharpasse laughed.

"That's richt," Dugdale agreed smilingly. "Yan for yan, an' t' udder for t' udder—an' nowt to pay for 't."

And so it came about that a second drinking

fountain, opposite the first, was erected in the main street of Harkerseat, to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the great Queen. And, like the first, it, too, runs dry every spell of dry weather. And the hot and tired tourist turns disgusted from the first, and tries the second. As he flings down the dusty mug, his eye rests upon the legend neatly carved in gold letters above the tap—

“Ho! Every one that thirsteth!”

And he hoeth. And then he turneth him to the beck or the public house, as his predecessors have done from time immemorial. And John Dugdale, if he has to put up with a bit of chaff, always has the last word.

“Why-a? What hasta? There’s nowt to pay for t’ oopkeep! Think o’ what we save on t’ rates, an’ sic like. . . .”

When this affair of state had thus been satisfactorily settled, the party broke up. At the invitation of Jeremiah Butt, Sharpasse, Derrydoe, and Dugdale adjourned to the White Lion for a glass of whisky.

“Your good health, John,” Mr. Butt pledged him, when the whisky was brought. “It is sad to think this is about the last time you’ll be able to come into the White Lion.”

“Hoo’s that?” asked Dugdale, putting down his glass in evident agitation.

“Why, when your precious fountain is up, you know——”

“Nay, but there’s to be nae compulsion. A man’s free to drink what he likes. If I voats for t’ fountain,

it's because I'se like t' la'al lass as went to church an' bowed twice i' t' Creed. 'Why was that?' her Missus axed her. 'Sithee, lass, what for dosta bow a second time?' T' lass oop an' sez, 'Ma mither was allus terr'ble canny an' tellt me to mak' freends wi' bee-ath sides. Happen t' De'il isna sae black as he's pictured, ye ken, an' yan might some day want him to do yan a good turn, an' then.'"

When the laugh that greeted this sally had subsided, Sharpasse said—

"I suppose we shall get a good subscription from this new millionaire?"

"What?" exclaimed Derrydoe. "You're not going to ask that chap?"

"And why not? We can count him a resident, surely?"

"But he's a horrible feller!"

"Just what I say," Butt joined in, "a horrible feller."

"No worse than anybody else, I dare say," said Sharpasse, lightly. "And he would be sure to give a good subscription."

"Aye, I reckon he's terr'ble rich," said Dugdale, putting down his tumbler. "I saw him mesel' t' udder da-ay. He's nobbut a weakling to look at, is yon. But he's done a deal o' night work, I'se warrant ye—buying and selling shares and sic-like, and saved it too, likely, t' la'al beggar! Eh, but he's terr'ble rich, nae doot. But," he added with a sigh of relief, "he canna tak' it wi' him, ye ken."

The reflection was both moral and comforting, and Dugdale gazed benignantlly into an empty glass, feeling that the balance of things had been adjusted.

"He's a horrible feller—a horrible feller, I say," Derrydoe repeated. "I wouldn't allow my wife to call on them, not for anything—— Dugdale, you'll have another whisky? Yes, he's a horrible feller. I'm certain of it. Don't you lower us by asking him for a subscription, Sharpasse. He's a horrible feller, you take my word. And if you do dun him, as likely as not he'll be giving us a free library, or something. Just like all these American millionaires, I bet you. A horrible feller! Why can't they stay in their own country? Free libraries, I ask you."

He emptied his third glass in his indignation.

"I quite agree with you," said Butt. "About calling, I mean. In fact, I have given my wife a pretty strong hint not to take any notice of them. We don't want to be patronized here, do we? Besides, it's generally known that Nailes' record is pretty shady. Isn't it, Sharpasse?"

"Oh, well—you know what these financiers are," replied Sharpasse. "Nailes is successful, that is all."

"Patronized, that's just it!" exclaimed Derrydoe, with growing heat. "Patronized, I believe you! No, we don't want the man's beastly dollars—a horrible feller, I tell you, a horrible feller. Free libraries and swimming baths next! I know them." He sought to soothe his feelings in a fourth glass of whisky, pressing Dugdale to join him.

The evening was far advanced before Captain Derrydoe had quenched his ire in copious libations of whisky. He had half a mile to walk to his house, and the night was very dark. So full was he of supper and distempering draughts, that it was evident that he would never get there by himself. Dugdale,

whose head was stronger, or, at least, whose legs were steadier, offered to give him an arm. A boon companion tried to dissuade him.

"It's terr'ble dark, to-night, John," he remarked warningly.

"Dark as a bag!" John assented, bold and gay. "But I'se frichtened nane o' t' boggles,* not I." And the night fire that clings round a man's feet and pulls him down to drown in the bog, that, he averred, "was nobbut ma'apment,† anyway."

So with a daredevil laugh, the two lurched away through the narrow streets out into the dark country lane. Derrydoe was still heard to murmur something about "a horrible feller" in the intervals of hiccups and a wild attempt at a song.

"Whisht, man!" said Dugdale, presently. "Be whisht‡ as a troot. We're passing t' Gibbet Moss, an' us mun no wake t' barghaists."

Derrydoe stopped singing, and the two proceeded, unsteadily and in silence, past the site of the old gibbet, where the body of a notorious sheep-stealer had once been hung in chains. The gibbet was no longer there. A slip of wood, slivered in the moon's eclipse, from beneath a dangling corpse, was too well known a cure for toothache. The last fragments of the old posts had long ago been used for that purpose. But the terror of the spot still haunted it, and the perturbed spirit of the sheep-stealer was believed still to walk the peat moss at night.

Nor was this all. It was well known that there abode here a gruesome flay,§ which for reasons best

* Ghosts.

† Quiet.

‡ Only chance.

§ Spirit.

known to itself, chose to assume sometimes the form of a little old woman who came and looked into your face with blazing eyes, sometimes the shape of a "girt dawg wi'oot a head," which ran up to you and rubbed against your legs, at darkening. Many a strong man, Dugdale began uneasily to remember, had run back home and bethought him of his sins, when he had heard that boggle nap-napping along the road in his rear, overtaking him.

Silently then, and unsteadily, the two men passed the Gibbet Moss, and came to the sharp bend of the road, which led to Captain Derrydoe's house. Suddenly the rays of the moon, struggling through the clouds, lit on the white sign-post above them. An owl hooted in the sky. Dugdale, whose terror had been increasing every moment, clutched his companion and whispered in his ear, "T' barghaist!" He pointed upwards, seeming to discern a headless figure with two white arms outspread above them, threateningly. And again he heard the wild eldritch shriek. His eyes started from his head, his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. They were near the gate of the gallant Captain's drive.

"Good night and—hic—thank you," said the Captain. Dugdale grasped his companion's arm firmly, as he made an effort to move on.

"Nay, nay, man!" he cried, finding his voice as the vision faded. "I'se as much in t' muck as thou's in t' mire. I'se seed t' barghaist. We mun hev summut like fairation. I'll nivver dare gang heam by my leanes. Thou mun set me back."

"Why, you're not frightened, man!" the Captain tried to cheer him.

"Aye, but I am. I'se nigh fleyt * tae dee-ath. Hoo wadsta hev me pass t' Gibbet Moss efter I hev seed t' barghaist here? I'se no ga'en yon trod wi' nowt but mesel'. Thou mun see me see-af he-am!"

"That's true," replied the Captain, gallantly. "I'll set you back." He lurched about and the two retraced their steps towards the village. When they had passed the Moss, Dugdale's courage returned. But the cold night air was taking effect upon Derrydoe's fuddled brain. His steps became more and more erratic and wayward. He waved a sleepy "Good night" to Dugdale, and collapsed into the hedge.

"Thou'll nivver get heam by thysel', man," said Dugdale.

"I'm going to sleep here," the other averred.

"Nay, I mun gie thee a hand back. Coom on, lad!" And again they set forth arm-in-arm towards the Captain's house. And again, when the journey was completed, the terror of the barghaist re-asserted itself in Dugdale's muddled mind. And with each hoot of a hunting owl, horror was heaped upon horror's head. Again the farmer's courage failed him, and again he was obliged to avail himself of the tipsy gentleman's company.

How often they twain trod and re-trod that haunted Moss, none will ever know. But history relates that, when the sun rose, it revealed two stiff and weary men, not far from the Captain's gate. One, with his head upon the other's shoulder, was drowsily asserting that he would walk no further; the other was endeavouring to explain to him that he could not face the shrieking of the barghaist alone.

* Frightened.

“Why, man!” exclaimed the first passer-by, addressing the distraught farmer, “thou’s white as a clout. What ails thee liggin * thar, and joost about dee-ad? Hasta seen a boggle? or what hasta?”

“But what, there’s a lock † o’ truth in what thou sayst,” replied Dugdale. “Thou’s i’ t’ richts on’ that. I’s seed t’ auld Lad hissel’. I’s coom for, lad. I’s coom for.”

* Lying.

† Lot.

CHAPTER VI

MICKLE LONETHWAITE FARM

It was not only the dovecots of Harkerseat that were fluttered by the presence of Phineas T. Nailes in their midst. Even Millionaires' Road, which skirts the shores of Windermere, was stirred by the news that the "Champion Grabber" of New York, as his countrymen termed him, had settled in the neighbourhood. And when it became known, as it quickly did, that that arch-gambler, so far from taking a holiday, was operating again in American Rails, scarcely a day passed without calls being paid on Corah by the wives of two or three of the rich business men, who lived at Windermere, and worked at Liverpool or Manchester.

Nor did some of the county families fail to condescend. Corah had the amusement of receiving several ladies of title who, she knew, were merely anxious to extract a Stock Exchange tip from her father. Nailes himself scarcely ever appeared upon these occasions. He seldom went outside the house, and never beyond the garden. He was wholly immersed in the most absorbing and exciting pastime in the world—the immensely complicated business of conducting a huge stock-rigging deal.

"The prime necessity in great stock operations,"

Nailes observed one morning at breakfast, "is to conceal one's movements." A faint, cruel smile flickered over his lips as he watched his Secretary.

"I suppose so," said Leigh, with an air of indifference, though secretly he was wondering whether this marvellous schemer had divined the workings of his own brain and his frantic endeavours to discover the meaning of Nailes' manoeuvres.

"Yes," continued Nailes, "we're up against the big brainy men of New York now. And if you want to beat them, you have to be secret, cool, and—yes, ruthless." He rose from the table and walked about the room, biting his nails in his impatience.

"Oh, Corah, say, why ever did you bring me to this nightmare of a place, where I can't get my mails till ten o'clock?"

"For a rest cure, Dad," replied Corah, coldly. "Why, you're as nervous as if you were on Wall Street."

"It's Wall Street that is getting nervous," said Nailes, with a note of triumph in his grating voice.

It was true. Men never knew what Nailes held or what he sold. Operating as he did, in a score of names through forty or fifty different brokers, nobody could tell whether he controlled this railway, or that mine, or that Telegraph Union. But when Wall Street thought it saw his finger stirring behind a movement of stock, as it did upon this occasion, Wall Street always got into a flurry.

"What are you playing at now, Dad?" asked Corah.

"There are more factors in a big deal than I could

list you in a fortnight, my dear," he replied, with a cunning smile in the direction of Leigh.

"Is this a big deal?"

"I tell you it's great, *great!*" He almost shouted with delight. He sat down on the edge of a chair. "I have been clerk in a hardware store," he said to Leigh, reflectively, "and I have worked in a newspaper office, and I know the world from A to Z, and I have never yet met the man who wasn't a bit of a gambler by nature. That is the great thing to remember when you are conducting an operation. Speculation appeals to everybody—ministers, stockholders, doctors, lawyers, the swell crowd and the sundowners—we are all gamblers at heart. There is not a man living who can resist the chance of getting something for nothing. But it's not very easy to do that, and those that can, aren't the men to give the show away, you bet!"

"I suppose not," said Leigh, again. Inwardly he was burning with rage and desire—desire to probe this inscrutable man's secret, rage at his own realized impotence.

"It takes a bit of learning, I expect?" Leigh added presently.

"I believe you. I made my first deal when I was fifteen."

"How was that?"

"I had run away from home. The farm out West where I was raised didn't seem suited to my talents. I landed up at a hardware store in a jay town where the boss boarded me in return for keeping his books. Then my chance came. My boss wanted to buy some land for two thousand dollars. He asked me to

negociate the business because he couldn't read. The owner of the land wanted four thousand. I sized it up that it was worth more. As my boss wouldn't be raised, I bought the land myself for three thousand dollars. He was pretty mad when I sold out for six thousand within the year, I can tell you. Waal, that's how I made my first scoop."

Leigh looked at the speaker closely. He was evidently utterly unaware that he had been telling a story about himself upon which adverse criticism could be based.

"They call me an unscrupulous gambler," Nailes added with a bitter little laugh. "They would call themselves brainy and courageous, if they were in my place." And, so saying, he left the room, whistling, horribly out of tune, a music-hall song. Leigh turned straight to Corah.

"Miss Nailes," he said, "will you tell me why your father left America?"

"Guess he had made it too hot for him," she answered coolly. But there was a flush of shame on her brow which belied her tone.

"You mean——?"

"Well, you see, as I've told you, Dad's always wound up. He can't ever rest from making dollars. An American boss works for his own pocket all the time. He don't ever think of anything or anybody else. At least, that is the way it strikes me. Dad's line is railway stock. He don't ever *do* anything or *make* anything, don't Dad. He just buys railway stock till he has got control of a line. Then he runs it, feeds it, starves it, ruins it, and waters the stock, just according as he feels like being a bull or a bear."

"As he wishes to send the price of the shares up or down, on the strength of the dividends paid or passed?"

"Why, certainly."

"It sounds fairly cynical. But still I don't see why he should have had to bolt—to leave America, I mean."

"You needn't apologize," said Corah, quietly. "I have told you already, I can't admire Dad."

"Do you mind telling me—people hint things to me—and not knowing the truth, I don't know how to meet them."

Corah looked out of the window. A bed of Ghent azaleas with their swelling buds of yellow, pink, and vermilion, held her eye for a moment.

"Aren't they beautiful?" she murmured. Then, with a little sigh, she turned again towards Leigh.

"Yes," she said. "You ought to know, and I want you to know. It all came out of a feud of Dad's with Lionel G. Puggins. Puggins was his great rival on Wall Street. They were both trying to gain control of the Narragansett railway. Dad had long been a bear of the stock—had sold millions of stock, in fact, expecting the price to fall. The whole Street knew that he was heavily short. Suddenly the price began to rush up. Puggins was tickled to death. He thought it was a cinch for him. Nailes was caught short, everybody said, and no mercy was to be shown him. But the truth was that Dad had not only bought in all his "shorts," but had purchased enough stock to give him control of the Company. Then he had turned bull. It was *he* who had started the rise. And not one of them knew it till too late. Puggins never forgave him for that."

"I can't help admiring that," said Leigh. "It does require immense nerve and courage and brain to achieve a *coup* like that."

"If only it did some good!" said Corah, wistfully. "Anyway, Puggins could not rest till he had turned the tables. He got going again presently, and bought and bought Narragansett stock till he had made a corner in it. Of course, Dad in the meantime had sold most of his shares at top prices, and had made millions. But when he found old man Puggins had cornered his railway, and knew that, as soon as he got control, he would stop him from using it to feed other pet lines in which he held all the shares—why, Dad got fairly mad. He beat Puggins by issuing fresh stock just as fast as ever Puggins bought. There was millions and millions of scrip out—issued by Dad alone from his office—before Puggins was beat. Of course, thousands of people were ruined along with him. That wouldn't have worried Dad. But as he could not quite succeed in bribing the Legislature—well, he had to quit."

"I see," said Leigh, slowly. "Wonderful—it really is wonderful."

"And Dad never seems to think of the thousands and thousands of poor people he ruined, in order to be quits with Puggins," Corah added bitterly. "That's why *I* can't admire Dad."

A harsh, grating chuckle startled them. Nailes stood grinning maliciously behind his Secretary.

"Do you know the Indian name for an aspen tree, Corah?" he rasped out. "It's 'Woman's tongue,' they call it becas' it is never still. Why *should* I pity the gamblers who lose? Would they have pitied *me*,

if Puggins had smashed *me*? *Pity* them!” he repeated, with rising indignation. “How many of them come to thank me when they have made a pile by following me? It’s all their own cuteness *then*, and it’s all *my* fault when they lose.”

Corah shook her head, but held her peace.

“Well, Leigh, now that you have learned something of my past, it’s time we got to business.”

Leigh followed the millionaire eagerly to his study. His eyes were flashing with excitement. Corah’s story, which, while frankly told, must, he knew, still gloss over many discreditable episodes, confirmed all that he had heard about Nailes, and all that he had read of him in the financial journals which poured into the house. His employer stood revealed as an arch-cynic. But, what interested him more, his method of procedure was now made clear to Leigh. The talk of millions of dollars had inflamed his appetite for money. As they walked to Nailes’ study, he was making his decision. He would open an account with his stockbroker in town, and, when he sent off Nailes’ telegrams, he would send off one on his own account, whenever he could make out which way the millionaire was heading. Very often, so contradictory were the instructions despatched, it had been impossible for him to make out whether Nailes was a bull or a bear. But there were some days on which it was pretty evident that he was buying for a rise, and there were others when it was equally evident that he was selling for a fall. Upon what grounds he decided to do the one or the other, Leigh could not imagine. But he observed that he never made a mistake. Leigh had come to the conclusion that there was some factor in

the background, which Nailes could manipulate in order to bring about the effect upon the stock which he desired. What that factor was, he had vainly endeavoured to discover. Nailes was secret as the grave. But what, he argued to himself, did that matter? All he had to do, was to follow the millionaire blindfold whenever he could make sure that he was expecting the stock to rise or fall. Clearly Nailes knew what was going to happen, and engineered the result. It was for him to take advantage of that result, and leave the working of the machine to the engineer.

When the two men left the room, Corah sat for a while gazing sadly out of the window. She was aware that she had put Leigh to a test. It was equally evident that he had failed to respond. She had been—she was—strongly attracted by him. His handsome presence, his keen intellect, the manly vigour of an expert oarsman, the polished and superior manner of an Oxford man, all appealed to her strongly. When he had sat with her and allowed her to read to him some of her favourite passages in Wordsworth; when, walking over the fells, he had shared her keen appreciation of the loveliness of sky and moor and mountain and mere, she had felt drawn to him as never before to any man. And then at other times, but never so sadly as now, he had been weighed in the balance and found wanting. He was like all the other men, it seemed, with whom she had ever come in contact. The greed of gold, or the lust of women, made them all beasts. Pitiless desire for pleasure or power—that was the only thing that really appealed to them. Leigh could play with poetry and the beauty of a

scene, which was more than her father ever pretended to do ; but the talk of dollars made his eyes flash and his lips part.

No more than with her father, did the means of getting them seem to weigh with him. She had watched him closely as she told him the tale of her father's achievements. It was only the success that had stirred him. A little disapproval of mean and dishonourable methods had appeared for an instant, but only to be swallowed up in admiration and awe of the man's grit and resource. And of pity for the thousands he had ruined—not all gamblers, they knew that as well as she—but thousands of honest investors, the fatherless, and widows ; thousands of honest workmen rendered homeless and breadless through the ruin of industries frozen out by her father's railway manœuvres—of pity for these, not a spark, when once the greed of gold was stirred within him. She remembered, too, how Leigh's sympathy had shrivelled up when she spoke to him of her mother, the other day. No, men were all alike—all beasts at heart !

She rose and put on her hat with a sigh. The air was heavy with the honey-scented blossoms of lilacs, laurels and azaleas. The hum of the bees was loud amongst the tasseled blooms of sycamore and holly. Corah longed for the fresh air of the open moor. She crossed the old pack-horse track and made her way to the rock from which she had shown Leigh that wonderful view of the mountains, the day after he had arrived. That was a month since.

She sat down and gazed at the panorama, clutching a little volume of Wordsworth in her hands. Tears

came slowly to her eyes. The spot where she rested was not far from the crag, above "the meeting point of two highways," where Wordsworth, as a schoolboy, had played the scout and watched for the coming "of those led palfreys that should bear" him home to Cockermouth for the holidays. Corah amused herself by looking for the features of the landscape he had described.

"—the single sheep and the one blasted tree
And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist,
Which gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath."

And as she so communed with the poet's mind, she became one with Nature, and Peace entered and possessed her soul. Under the spell of his magic, she saw and understood, as never before, the grandeur of the looming mountains, the peace and cosiness of the Lakeland dwellings, the romance of winding road and distant fell, the beauty of the soft lights and shadows of driving mist and gleaming sunshine.

She was roused from her reverie by the step of a man upon the road close at hand.

It was Lancaster Syms. As soon as he caught sight of her, he vaulted lightly over the railings, and in a moment was at her side. When he was a few feet away he suddenly called out sternly—

"Sit still! Don't move."

He struck swiftly and fiercely with his stick near her feet, amongst the fronds of young bracken which were uncurling in the sunshine beneath the rock upon which she was half reclining.

"What is it?" she whispered.

"An adder. It's all right. It's dead." He kicked it away. "It's just the sort of day they come out on," he observed. "Poor beast, it seems a shame to kill it! But one can't afford to trifle with adders."

She thrilled with pleasure at his sympathy for the snake he had been obliged to kill.

"Thank you," she said. "I needn't ask if it was necessary, for I know you would not have done it otherwise. Are there many of them about, and are they very dangerous?"

"Yes, lots. And their bite is no joke. But don't let me frighten you. You are not likely to see another yet awhile, and if you did, it wouldn't hurt you unless you happened to kick it by mistake. I was afraid you might do so then."

"I wasn't so quick as you," she smiled. "I was dreaming."

"I suppose I must not ask what about?"

She looked up quickly at the blue eyes gazing down upon her in frank and innocent admiration. They shone from a clear bronzed countenance which spoke of health and good spirits and a boyish heart.

"Oh, this country of yours."

"Do you like it?"

"It is wonderfully beautiful. And it is so different every day and every hour."

"Yes, that is its great charm. You never get to know it by heart. Every yard, every hour it changes. The colour of the bracken, the heather, the tint of every rock, the shape and texture of the clouds, the form and character of each fell—they are never the same two minutes together. You can imagine, it is the despair of painters." He spoke with an eager

personal enthusiasm that sounded so much more whole-hearted than Leigh's spasmodic appreciations.

"Do you sketch?" she asked, looking up at him, and thinking how fine a man can look on a moor, if he is just so.

"No, I should like to—I never tried. One way and another, I never seem to have time. I'm 'ower thrang,' as the people here would say."

"I suppose you *are* kept pretty busy?"

"Yes, my partner, you see, can't do the distances very well now. And one has to cover a good deal of ground at my job."

"You like that, though, I guess?"

"Rather. That is why I am here. I can't stick town life at any price."

"You have tried it?" she encouraged him.

He sat down upon the grass at her feet, and chewing a piece of grass, began to talk freely to her, with a delightful confidence.

"Oh yes, of course, when I was doing the hospitals. In fact, I was a good deal tempted to go in for a town practice. One or two men in the profession made me very good offers. But life in a city doesn't seem to me to be life at all. I must be out and about in the open air. I get lots of that here, I can assure you." He laughed, and added, "But in *such* country." His eyes wandered again towards the panorama of mountains.

"By Jove!" he said, "it's rather clever of you to have found this spot. It's only a few yards away, and yet the view is twenty times as good as one gets from the road."

"Didn't you know it?"

"No, I confess I didn't. Though I go this way pretty often."

"Then I have taught you something in your own country. That's great." She laughed, and again her pure musical joyous laugh, which had fascinated him on the day they first met, thrilled him through and through.

He rose, and looked at her in silent admiration. Only when the colour began to mount to her cheeks did he become conscious of his breach of manners.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered awkwardly. "I was thinking—I must be going on. I am on my way to see a patient—the mother of such a bonny little kid—I wonder whether—whether you would care to walk over with me. It is a glorious wild bit of moor on the way to Mickle Lonethwaite Farm."

"What a cunning name? Is it very lonesome?"

"Very. Mrs. Jackson will tell you about that!"

Corah leaped to her feet. "Rather," she exclaimed. "I should love it."

"So you don't regret a possible practice in Harley Street, and the eventual knighthood?" she asked, as they strode along the rough track.

Syms flushed. "Oh, I don't suppose it would have come to that," he said modestly. "But, anyway, I don't. Why should I? I'm not ambitious."

"Most men would think of the dollars," she suggested.

"Oh yes, most men would, I know. But if there is one thing I know more certainly than anything else, it is that money does not mean happiness."

"Yes?"

"Not necessarily, I mean. Of course, the lack of

it may mean unhappiness. In fact, I don't believe for a moment that poverty—real poverty—is good for anybody. Poverty doesn't ever make people virtuous. Some moralists and politicians talk as if the poor had the monopoly of all the virtues, and as if all rich people were wicked. That is all tommy rot. The poor have their virtues, certainly, wonderfully so. And nobody admires more than I do their pluck and patience, and the way they help each other, and try to keep up to a standard. But many, many go under in the struggle; and even those who don't would be all the kinder, and gentler, and brighter, and more generous, if they had a competence. Thank God, there's not much real poverty about here. The people aren't rich, but they make ends meet, one way and another."

"And the rich?"

"Well, all I can say is, I don't know one really rich person who is the happier and better for being rich. Lots of people are happy in spite of their riches, of course; if they are happily married, for instance. And lots of good people get pleasure from the use they can make of their money. It would be delightful to be able to give one's wife and children everything they wanted, and to help others, but——"

"Yes, but what?"

"Well, I was just wondering whether the wives and children are really the happier for that? Wouldn't those that are happy when they are rich, be even happier if they knew what it was to have to do without things; if they knew the pleasure there is in waiting before you get everything you want, and the freedom that comes from not having too many things

to do and think about—the freedom to do and think about what really interests you, what is really worth while?”

“I guess you are about right,” Corah replied. “But so few people really know what is worth while. They just do and dress as other people dress and do. They haven’t minds to do anything else; and they like to have the money to be able to do that.”

“I know,” said Syms. “The world sometimes seems a nightmare of imbecility.”

“There is one thing I think you have left out from your Sermon on the Mount,” Corah said after an interval of reflection.

“What is that?” he laughed.

“The pleasure of *making* money. It is what nearly all my countrymen live for. I don’t say dollars make people happy, but there is an extraordinary fascination in getting them.”

“Of course. Certainly there is. But to me it seems a most mean and abject occupation.” He stopped suddenly and flushed. “I beg your pardon,” he stammered.

“Not at all,” the girl replied coolly.

“All I meant,” he explained, “was that it seems to me a most extraordinary confusion between the means and the end, when people think of nothing else.”

“I guess I think the same as you. When a man, who has got enough dollars, just lives to pile up more, I always think he is no better than a miser gone mad.”

“Well, I’m afraid we should have to build a lot more lunatic asylums, if everybody agreed about

that," said Symms. "But here we are at Mickle Lonthwaite Farm."

They had crossed a long stretch of high moorland whilst they talked, and came suddenly upon a small farmhouse, sheltered beneath two gigantic yew trees, and set in a frame of apple and pear trees in full bloom. The house was protected from the prevailing winds by the undulation of the ground, and by a row of barns and byres, built of immense stones set upon the live rock. So massive are the farm buildings in these parts, that many are inclined to think that they were built, not merely to store grain and hay, but also to serve on occasion as miniature forts, when the Scots came roving over the Border. "Roving" sounds very romantic nowadays, but our forbears knew that it meant "robbing."

A flight of stone steps led up to the garrets of the long, low house. A porch, composed of four huge slabs of rough-hewn slate, with a little stone seat inside, sheltered the entrance. Symms called the attention of his companion to the western corner of the house, where a huge boulder formed the corner stone and nearly a third of the end of the wall.

The house, into which Corah had the good fortune now to be introduced, was typical of the old dwellings of the Westmorland "Statesmen"—farmers who held their freeholds for generations, and are far, now, from having parted with their qualities, because their fathers parted with their freeholds. The rough, strong Berserker, who founded the neighbouring town, brought to the district the rough, strong people of the Fells; men with broad shoulders, and long arms, and arched noses, and strong jaws, and grey-blue eyes,

who gave their Celtic names to the mountain-tops, whereon their chiefs were buried, Blencathra, Glaramara, Rydal, Catchidecam, Helvellyn. And here, within their circle of mountains, they have remained ever since, a complete democracy of peasants and yeomen, into whose lives the influence of an aristocracy, as exerted everywhere else in Great Britain, never entered. In this fair corner of England mankind has never been really conquered by invading monarchs, any more than the mountains have been wholly conquered by man. These facts are reflected in the architecture of the Dales.

During the last hundred years there has been a change from "estatesmen" to large landlords, and an influx of villa-residents and tourists. But there are no large country-houses, centuries old, such as are the pride of England and Scotland.

The typical home of the Lakelander is just such a farmhouse as Corah and Syms now approached.

Facing them as they entered, a wooden partition, or "heck," reached to the low ceiling. An opening to the right of this partition led to the "mell-doors," or passage, communicating with the "down-house," consecrated to the arts of washing, brewing, and so forth. Passing to the left, round the back of the "heck," Corah and the doctor found themselves in a long, low room. The ceiling was divided by heavy oak beams from which hung rows of muslin bags, containing cuts of bacon and mutton hams. An oaken table, upon which stood some pewter vessels, filled the centre of the "hoose," as this living-room was called. A dresser of carved oak, laden with pewter and china, filled the wall opposite to the entrance.

At the far end of the room, a richly carved aumry (or huge store cupboard) was built into the wall, which divided the "hoose" from the dairy and bed-chamber. On one side of the dresser stood a plain oak chest, furnished with good "gimmers" (hinges) and an elaborate steel lock; on the other, a spinning wheel recalled the days when your statesman's doublet was of true homespun wool, from native fleece, and his shirt was made of fine hemp or coarse flax, grown upon the farm, and "battled" on a stone to soften the harshness of the material.

With a woman's quick eye, Corah took in all these details almost at a glance. She gave a little gasp of surprised delight. When she turned the corner of the partition, she found that the whole of that end of the room was taken up by the "house fire." Wood and peats were burning upon a huge open hearth. A long fixed seat, on the interior side of the heck, stood at right angles to the fire. It faced another large oaken chest, wonderfully carved and bearing the date 1672. A sconce, or high-backed settle of black oak, which had been drawn out and placed at an angle to the fire, snugly enclosed the ingle-neuk. Some highly-polished brass candlesticks stood on the narrow shelf above the fire. Across the chimney ran a heavy beam, the rannel-tree. From it hung the racken crook, a chain furnished with a pot-hook, which could be moved from link to link as the brass cooking-pot was required to be raised or lowered over the fire. On the hearth lay a pair of brass tongs, as bright as the brass warming pan which hung upon the wall, and, beside them, a creshet (fire-basket), a girdle, and a brandreth, for making bread and cakes. Seated in the sconce, a

handsome woman was dandling an infant in her lap.

"Good morning," cried Syms. "You see I have brought you a visitor, Mrs. Jackson."

"She's gradely welcome," was the answer. "There's nae sic a girt lock o' off-come foak * 'at cooms this wa-ay, ye ken. But sit thee doon, lass."

Corah and her companion took a seat beneath the heck. Corah praised the babe, which was indeed a fine child. She praised the furniture and the brass and pewter, which would have been worth a small fortune in these days. Mrs. Jackson glowed with pride. But, as is the way with her kind, she cloaked her pleasure in a grumble.

"Aye," she said, "and I'se kep' it i' fair fettle, though I'se been middlin' bad. It med 'a been nobbut waste o' time, happen. For thar's nobbut few to look at 't, awivver."

"I suppose it *is* rather lonesome here," said Corah, sympathetically.

"Leansome eneuf,† I'se warrant ye," replied Mrs. Jackson, beginning to speak in the rapid, eager manner of one who has not seen a new face for months. "Thar's few fresh faces to be seen here, I'se uphaud. I' t' fore-end o' t' year there's nobbut lambs and chickens and calves, and, i' t' back-end, nobbut tups and ewes and hens and coos, and maybe a strange cuddy,‡ like." She sighed wearily. "Aye," she continued, "it's leansome eneuf when t' dree white mist looms wemmling an' curling aboot t' hoose, an' thar's nobbut sic-like for a body to be passing time o' day wi.' "

* Such a lot of strangers.

† Lonely enough.

‡ Donkey.

"And how does your husband like it?" asked Corah.

"Forbye what, it's nae sae bad for John. He's no' yan o' t' newfangled soo-art. Nowt o' t' mak.* He'll hev his sheep and dogs an' t' farm lad for coompany. An' m'appen o' Saturdays he'll ride t' mare til market at Coniston. An' o' Sundays, i' t' summer, happen he'll gang ower Tilberthwaite way, an' try a fa' wi' t' lads at t' quarries yonder. He's a gey fine wurstler, is John. Forbye Thursday, he'll be awa' til t' hound trail, and happen he'll gang til t' Institute efter. There's a soo-art o' pillgill there at dark'ning, dancin' an' whisk, ye ken, or some sic ma'apment."

She nursed the child in her lap, which cooed back to her.

"And in the winter?" Corah pursued.

"Nay, John'll nivver lack coompany i' t' backend. For, sista, he allus hes his la-al sticks."

She pointed to a bundle of ash-sticks, neatly trimmed, which lay upon the beams of the ceiling. Corah took them down, and saw that the knobs were carved in the semblances of famous men.

"He's gey proud o' his sticks, is John," Mrs. Jackson added. "Yon's Gladstone. T'udder's John Bright. Nay, he'll nivver lack coompany, wull John, wi' sic grand foak aboot him. It's gey fine for John," she said, half contemptuous, half jealous. "He war born hyar, an' he kna's nae differ. But for me, ye ken, wha was born nobbut yan mile frae Harkerseat, i' t' heart o' t' warld, as ye med sa-ay, Mickle Lonethwaite is terr'ble leansome i' t' backend."

* Nothing of the kind.

"Well, well," struck in Syms, cheerily, "you've got the bairns to keep you busy now."

"That's richt eneuf," replied Mrs. Jackson, rousing herself from the contemplation of her misery. "But what, I'se forgotten mesel'. The lady will hev a sup o' tea, an' a currant pasty, sureli. Doctor, will ye reach them for me?"

Corah took, and praised a slab of currants packed between two layers of thick pastry.

"Noo, doctor," Mrs. Jackson turned to Syms. "Thou mun try oor apple pasty. Thar! That is better than owt t' Skiddaw Hermit ivver had i' a mort o' Sundays."

Corah found that her allowance of pasty was far more than she could manage. She decided therefore to escape for a while. Rising, she said she would walk about outside, whilst Mrs. Jackson talked with the doctor.

She walked for a few minutes, laughing at the ducks and hens and geese, which crowded round her, and feeding them with fragments of currant pasty.

Presently a burly farmer appeared coming from the fell, a man of gigantic stature, the veritable Man-mountain of De Quincey's story. Under one arm he carried a sick ewe, and under the other a bleating lamb. He halted when he saw Corah, and stood still upon the farm track, beneath an umbrella of crab-apple blossom.

"It's a fine day," said Corah.

"Aye, it's a grand day," the Man-mountain answered. "Hasta lost thysel', lassie?"

"No, thank you, I have come up with Dr. Syms to see Mrs. Jackson."

"Oh, aye, she'll be richt glad to see thee. Thou's t' daughter o' t' millionaire, likely. He's nobbut a la'al short body, an' a', they tell me. But what, making money is as easy to some folk as wheelin' a barrow."

Corah smiled and patted the sheep's head. "Are you going to save this one?"

"I doot it," he said, looking kindly down at his burden. "It'll be runnin' oop-bank* like, to se-ave this yan. Mair's t' pity."

Syms was just coming out of the door as they turned to go back to the farm. It was delightful to Corah to hear the bellow of welcome with which the gigantic farmer greeted him, calling to him as though he were a sheep dog on the opposite fell.

"Hoo's thysel', doctor? Owt fresh?" † Jackson roared, seizing his hand as he reached him.

"Nowt that's owt," ‡ replied Syms, dropping into the vernacular. "T' Galey's fixed for the 13th. Thy Missis is doing fine. And hoo's thyself?"

"Middlin', thank ye. T' 13th, sista? That'll be Whitsunda' Tuesday, seam as ivver? Weel, I mun get into fettle. Wilt thou try a fa', lad?"

Syms hesitated—looked at Corah, then at the giant wrestler before him, and shook his head laughing.

"Nay," he said, "I couldn't give you a moment's trouble."

Jackson turned to Corah. "He's a gey fine wurstler, Miss, is t' doctor," he said. "Forbye what, he's nae oop til my weight, an' mebbe he hes summut to learn yet."

"Oh, I'm no good," Syms said to Corah. "But if

* Uphill work.

† Any news.

‡ Nothing particular.

you won't be horrified, I should like to give Jackson a bit of practice. He's our champion, you know."

"I hope he won't hurt you," said Corah, suddenly displaying a charming interest in the younger man.

"I'd nae mair hurt t'doctor than I would hurt my la'al Mollie," Jackson reassured her. "Ka-ate, coom oot, and ca' t' holds."

Kate Jackson appeared at the farm door. "Is Mollie nae hee-am yet?" Jackson inquired.

"Naw. She mun be ditherin' alang t' trod, I'se warrant. I warned her to coom back hee-am as sune as she cud git. But things tak' nae mair holt on yon lassie, than if she war a dry pea."

A young man had sauntered up from the cow-byre, and stood at a little distance, mending a whip. It was Jake Todd, silent Jake Todd, as he was known to all, a nephew of Jackson's, who lived at Mickle Lonethwaite, and helped his uncle with the farm.

Corah noticed that his cheek flushed at Mrs. Jackson's acid reference to the absent Mollie. Mrs. Jackson noticed it too, and inwardly rejoiced.

"If some men war gradely men," she observed, speaking with intention, "La'al Mollie wud nivver hev tae wo-alk hee-am alee-an, wi' nobbut hersel'."

The flush on the young man's cheek deepened.

"Some foak wull nivver stop their clattin'," * he muttered, bending his head over the whip.

"Wharsta at, silent Jake?" cried his aunt, taking up the challenge readily enough. "Foaks can clat as they've a mind. But thou mun be geyley sharp, or thou'lt loss her."

With obvious difficulty Jake found words—some

* Chattering.

words, but words wholly inadequate to express his meaning.

"Happen thou think'st me rare an' silly, Aunt. But m'appen I'se nae sae rare an' silly as thou think'st."

He flung the whip down on the ground, and turned on his heel.

"I've thought sair aboot it," he said, as he walked away. "An' I wud nivver stop step, if 'twud be any manner o' use. But it's ga'en oop-bank like,* tae keep ga'en straight for'ard i' a regular storm o' wind an' sna'."

"Tak' a care, noo," Jackson interjected, checking a repartee from his wife. "Thou's thy neb † i' ivvery-buddy's business."

"Hearken til him," Mrs. Jackson exclaimed in disgust. "Whativver is foak tae dew? Hyar's oor Jake clean mizzled wi' love for oor la'al Mollie, an' nowt tae hinder neider yan nor t'udder. An' Jake canna' speak a word for hissels, t' girt hefty lubber an' Mollie dinna' ken why he dinna' speak, an' I munna' sa-ay a word til eider o' em."

"Haud thy peace, Kate!" said Jackson. "I'se fair mizzled wi' a' this to-alk. Mollie's a sensible, stirring buddy, an' she'll tak' Jake afoor she's doon, I'se warrant. But let him bide. A man canna' be coortin' ivvery time t' moon turns ower. I'se yan 'at likes young folk tae leuk afoor they loop."

"T' suner an' better, tae my wa-ay o' thinkin'," Mrs. Jackson replied, determined to have the last word. "But thar! A man mun allus be puttin' his spoke i' t' wheel."

* Uphill work.

† Nose.

Jackson disdained, or feared reply. "Noo, Doctor," he exclaimed, turning towards the waiting Syms, "us canna' stay hifflin' an' hafflin' a' day."

Syms cheerfully threw off his coat and boots. Then, very solemnly, the two men shook hands. Next leaning their heads on each other's shoulders, they flung their arms loosely round each other's waists, but without clasping hands. They moved carefully about, manœuvring for position, and occasionally swinging one arm or another as though to make sure of a grip. Syms could scarcely join his hands round the immense back of the farmer, whose titanic chest measured not an inch under four feet.

Corah marvelled at the lightness and agility with which the heavy, and, as she had thought, clumsy, farmer moved on his feet. It was some time before he made his grip secure. At last Jackson clasped his bent fingers in a firm grip round Syms' waist. Mrs. Jackson, infant at breast, proclaimed a fair hold. But in making his hold, Syms' feet lost something in position. The weight and tense muscles of the farmer had already begun to tell upon his strength. In a second he was flung high into the air. But he kept his grip gamely, and hung poised, legs in air, chest upon the chest of the Leviathan. Jackson drew a deep breath and endeavoured, by a sudden expansion, to break his opponent's hold. But the smaller man held tensely on, till Jackson was fain to allow him to return to earth. With a sudden twist he hurled him sideways. But Syms found his feet, and still retained his grip. Hoping to upset the mountain, he wound his legs about the farmer's enormous calves, exerting all his strength. But the great man stood the strain.

Only the faintest quiver revealed the enormous power he exerted to counter the doctor's lively attack. Then a smile came over his ruddy features, as he felt his assailant's muscles relax, and knew that his bolt was shot. He raised him as tenderly as if he had been a little child, and laid him on the ground on his back.

"Guid la-ad, guid la-ad!" he said as the doctor regained his feet, and laughingly shook hands. "Yon was a gey determined do. Thou's a bonny wurstler for thy weight, awivver."

"Thar's naebuddy aboot hyar can bang my John for wurstling," observed Kate Jackson, proudly commending her man. Corah noticed with what gaiety and good humour Syms took his fall, and with what evident satisfaction he received his praise. She realized with pleasure that he was a true English sportsman, for whom to do his best in a friendly contest was of more account than a prize or a trophy.

Syms put on his coat, and, flushed and laughing, declared that they must be going. They said farewell, and turned their faces to the moor. When they had gone a hundred yards or so, they turned to look back at the little farm. In the foreground the smooth green grass, close-cropped by geese and fowls, glittered in the bright sunlight, forming a brilliant contrast with the cold, dark green of the yew trees planted almost in the foundations of the house. Corah called the attention of Syms to this effect of colour.

"Yes," he said. "And what splendid trees those are! You will nearly always find a huge yew tree close to the farm houses in these parts. I fancy they must date from the time when every statesman had

need of one to fashion his bow out of, and that they planted the trees near the steading in order that the cattle and sheep might not poison themselves by eating the leaves and berries as they would do if they were in the open fields. But it is a pure guess. I am no antiquarian, I'm afraid. Hallo!"

Jackson's gigantic frame had appeared in the porch. He was bellowing to Syms and brandished something in his hand.

"What's up, I wonder?"

They waited till the farmer came up to them.

"Yan for thee, doctor, an' t' udder what for thee, lass. I thowt happen they would be to your likin'." So saying he thrust a carved ash-stick into the hands of each. "I'se doon them a' mesel'," he said, reddening, "Yan's Gladstone, t' udder John Bright." As they began to thank him, he fairly turned tail and ran.

Corah smiled happily. "What a dear!" she said. "And who is the little Mollie he seems so fond of?—the eldest?"

"No," Syms answered, "an orphan niece of Mrs. Jackson's. She lives with them. She is as pretty as a dream."

"I think," said Corah quietly to Syms, as they pursued their way home, "I think I begin to see why you like this country and these people. It was good of you to take me there. All that was the kind of thing a stranger would never have guessed, without such an introduction."

"I'm so glad," Syms replied. "They are grand folk up here, when you get to know them. But they are proud and independent, and rather silent. They don't expand to strangers very much, and they haven't

the easy courtesy of your Southron. So, as you say, they want knowing. Well, here we are at Gallowbarrow Lodge. Good-bye. I hope I have not made you late for lunch."

"Oh, lunch doesn't matter," she replied; and added, shyly, "Er—by the way, I haven't sent you an invitation, but will you—would you care to come to our garden-party to-morrow afternoon?"

Syms said he would be charmed. And Corah, as she walked up the drive, found occasion to marvel at herself.

"Why, that's the first time on record Corah Nailes has been known to feel shy," she muttered reprovingly.

She found Leigh reclining in a hammock beneath the thorn tree on the lawn.

"I hope you haven't been waiting lunch for me," she exclaimed.

"Oh no," he replied, rising and throwing away a cigarette. "I have only just got back from Harkerseat myself." He stopped abruptly. Corah was conscious that he was embarrassed and that he did not look her straight in the face.

"Why, what was going on there?" she queried.

"Oh, nothing. Er—only that old bore, Dr. Merriman, button-holed me, and yarned away. By the bye I had to fix a day for you to go on the lake with him. He said you promised to. I named Wednesday. Is that all right? I can easily get out of it, if it bores you?"

"Not at all, thank you. I shall enjoy it," Corah replied coldly. For she felt instinctively that he did not wish to explain what had really delayed him.

He was concealing something from her. What? she wondered. She felt piqued at his reticence, and then doubly piqued because she had allowed his reticence to concern her. It was no business of hers, surely. She consoled her modesty by assuring herself that it was Leigh's unnecessarily guilty manner that had offended her.

She hated people who were not quite straight, or gave you that impression. And then she flushed annoyedly as she found some difficulty herself in saying—

"I met Dr. Syms on the moor, and he took me to such a cunning little farm. He had a wrestling match with the farmer. He's all right, I guess."

Leigh assented, with a slightly contemptuous laugh. "Oh yes, Syms is a good fellow enough, but rather an ass."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, you know, he might be making three thousand pounds a year, if he had taken a practice in town and stuck to it, instead of vegetating down here."

Corah gave a little gasp. She hadn't thought Syms an ass when he had told her, with such fervid simplicity, his reasons for his choice. But she wasn't going to argue the matter with Leigh. She turned to her father, who came out of the house at that moment.

"We were talking of Dr. Syms, Dad," she said. "He saved my life from an adder right there on the moor. You must remember to thank him when I introduce him to you at the garden-party to-morrow."

Nailes groaned. "Oh, Gosh! The darned garden-party! Well, let's have lunch for any sakes."

Corah described her morning to her father, as

they went into the house. Leigh followed them in silence. A self-satisfied smile lurked on his dark features. He was glad he had not explained. And he was glad to learn from Corah that she had been away over the other side of the moor with Syms, when he had been amusing himself on this.

He had every intention of marrying this girl, presently, in spite of her vile Yankeeisms. She was pretty enough, and clever enough to make them bearable, till she got rid of them. Besides, half the peerage nowadays spoke either with an American or a Cockney accent. But he did not want to start his courtship with a lover's quarrel thus early, and, until he had made a little money on his own account, he did not intend to force the pace in any way. He would be in a much better position to deal with Nailes, if he could show that he was not absolutely penniless. A thrill of excitement went through his frame as he remembered that that very morning he had despatched a wire to his brokers, instructing them to buy heavily on his account. For he had made certain that Nailes was counting on a rise in Narragansett rails. It was a stroke of luck that Corah had not accompanied him to the post office. A double stroke of luck, for that *was* a girl to kiss, by Jove!

There was an ugly gleam in his half-closed eyes, as he sat at lunch, and a pleased, luxurious smile hovered over his thin lips as he smoked a cigarette afterwards, which turned Corah cold. He was thinking of a little adventure on the road which had befallen him also.

CHAPTER VII

A FELL-SIDE BEAUTY

WHEN Leigh had despatched his sheaf of cablegrams and telegrams, he had at once started to walk back, in the expectation of finding that Corah was awaiting him. He assumed that she had missed him by chance, and that she would be, perhaps, a little peevish at having been cheated of their usual morning walk. He was striding rapidly along the mountain track which leads up to Gallowbarrow Lodge, when, suddenly, turning a sharp corner, he beheld a vision of such rare delight that involuntarily he came to a halt, and stood at gaze. An opening in the wall to his right revealed a far-flung vista of water and wood and fell. Through plantations of larch and hazel-coppices divided by growing meadows, glistened the blue waters of Windermere, of Blelham Tarn, and Leva's Water. On the far horizon, veiled in a blue haze, rose the flat crest of Ingleborough and the Pennine Range.

But it was not the beauty of the scene below him which riveted the attention of Bertram Leigh. It was the picture of a young, lissom girl, who sat balancing herself on the topmost of three poles, the ends of which rested in holes in two upright slates serving as gateposts. Above her were festooned the twisted branches of a hawthorn tree, afoam with white blossom. The

girl's head was bare, save for the crowning glory of womanhood. For a wild wealth of brilliant golden-red hair covered her head and brows and neck, and flowed over her shoulders, and would doubtless have reached below her waist, had it not been caught up and half-confined by a green ribband.

It was one of those days at the end of May when the fields and hedgerows form, as it were, a symphony in green and white. On the green high fells lay, here and there, a patch of snow or hail, lurking to leeward of a wall, remnant of a past shower. Glistering silver against a green background, the snow caught up the note struck lower down by the scattered rowan trees and thorn trees, which were laden with feathery blossom, white as a wedding-cake. In the valley the bloom of the elders echoed the white lilac, and in the growing hay-fields carpets of white daisies shone in the dancing sunlight.

Mollie Atkinson was dressed in quite unconscious harmony with her surroundings. A plain cotton frock of pale green fitted close to her figure, and was finished at the open throat by a fichu of cream net. A white belt encircled her waist. She was dangling in her hand a broad-brimmed white hat, and the green silk scarf which was tied loosely about it, harmonized with her dress.

Pretty Mollie Atkinson! Blithe and bright and songful as the greenfinches and bullfinches and chaffinches which flitted so gaily along the walls and hedges; blithe and bright, and bonny, and pure, was there ever a fairer picture painted of Innocence and Spring than thy sweet face and stainless soul, on that spring day on that moorland track?

Leigh stopped and gazed at her. So great an intensity of delight in such loveliness, set in such a frame of beauty, thrilled his whole being, that, for the moment, there was nothing ugly in the smile that lit up his handsome features. The tribute of his unbounded admiration passed straight to the girl's heart. She felt her breast heave and her throat throb with the innocent pleasure of girlish vanity deliciously gratified. For the first time she realized the full power of her beauty, and delighted in it. This stranger was, to any eye, handsome, well set up; figure, features, gait, every inch a gentleman. And she, little Mollie Atkinson, more girl than woman as yet, even without her hat on, had, as she phrased it to herself, knocked him silly. The victory flattered her, and delighted her, even as the blood rushed to her young bosom, and her cheeks, with answering glow, proclaimed that she recognized his admiration and returned it. Innocent mischief danced in her eyes, and the delicious ecstasy of woman triumphant filled her being.

Leigh enjoyed one advantage over many men. He knew how to make love, in a flashy, daring sort of way, if he thought it worth while, or likely to be effective. So now, recovering from the shock of his surprise and encouraged by the smile upon the girl's flushed face, he advanced towards her, and leaning against the stile looked up at her parted lips with a bold admiring gaze.

"You make a pretty picture, sitting there, do you know?" he said.

She tossed her head and looked away, and the flush upon her cheek deepened. She searched for a retort.

She knew that a modest maiden ought not to encourage such bold advances. The heroines in her penny love stories always had an answer ready to crush such forward young men. But none came to her mind. She could only reply with a little gulp, "Oh!" And then, looking down again at Leigh's handsome face, she was glad she had not snubbed him. Perhaps if she had, he would have gone away in a huff.

"Yes," he said, drawing closer to her, "a *very* pretty picture. Are you waiting for anybody here?"

"No—yes, that is——"

"What does that mean?"

"Oh, well, I am always waiting for somebody—somebody who doesn't come."

"Really? That sounds very romantic. May I ask who it is?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? I'm a stranger here."

"Are you? Well, I'll tell you for a secret. It's a man." She dropped her eyes, and looked at Leigh coquettishly. He saw that they were of a deep liquid brown. And suddenly he remembered that Romney was born not many miles from here, and thought what a picture had been lost to the world for want of such an artist now.

"A man, is it?" he echoed. "Oh, dear, I'm very jealous."

"You needn't be." She laughed like a happy child who has asked a grown-up a riddle which he has failed to solve. "Because it's only my brother."

"Oh, come, that's better. There's hope for me yet, then."

She ignored the inference, continuing her story.

"When I say *only* my brother you must know that he is all the world to me—except my uncle, of course. But you say you are a stranger. Where do you come from? Manchester?"

"No," said Leigh, sharply, "London."

The child, for she was little more, though her full bosom proclaimed her woman to Leigh's admiring gaze, clapped her hands.

"You come from London? Oh, then you will know my brother. He's there, too. When did you see him last?"

Leigh smiled. "I don't know his name yet. And London is a big place."

"James Atkinson. He went up to London to be a poet ten years ago—he is nine years older than me—and they say he is a great poet now. He promised to come back—promised me here at this stile when he was going away—but he has never come back since. Oh, do tell me about him? Is he well, and strong, and rich, and as handsome as he used to be? And is everybody spoiling him, as the folk here say?"

She clasped her little hands unconsciously, and turned to Leigh with eager face, pleading so sweetly that he had not the heart to deny her. He could not dash her hopes by confessing that he had never heard of this famous poet from the dales. Besides, gratitude is akin to love. He would make her grateful. So he answered her easily enough.

"Rather. They say he is quite the coming poet, and all the duchesses ask him to their parties. Why, I have heard people say he will be the next Poet Laureate."

"Really?"

The soft, brown eyes beamed happily upon him. She was irresistible.

"Now let me help you down from this stile, and we'll walk on, and I'll tell you all about him," said Leigh.

As he spoke he slipped his arm round the girl's waist, and, drawing her yielding form down to his breast, he kissed her lovely, upturned lips, gently at first, and then with eager passion, again and again, quivering from head to foot.

"Oh," she cried, frightened and shocked. "Oh, put me down, please! Why did you do that?"

He saw the tears gathering in her eyes, and her red lips trembling. He judged it better to control his longing to repeat the kiss. He let go of her, and apologized.

"I'm awfully sorry. I couldn't help it. You are so pretty. I won't do it again without asking."

The tears receded. "Promise?" she said.

"Yes, honour! And now I'll tell you all about James Atkinson. You are going up the fell?"

"Yes, I live at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm, over the moor yonder."

"Ah! beyond Gallowbarrow Lodge?" They began to walk in that direction.

"Yes; a mile and a bit beyond. But tell me—if Jim is so rich—why doesn't he come back to see me? He promised he would." The corners of the lovely mouth drooped.

"I didn't say he was rich, did I? A man can't make a fortune out of poetry these days; not all at once, anyway. But he is getting famous, and the rich people are beginning to take notice of him."

"Well, rich foak is nobbut foak." The sister's jealousy flashed out.

"Yes, but they will buy his books and set the fashion, and then some day he'll be rich enough to come down here and see you. It's a long way, you know."

"Parlish lang."

She sighed, but looked up at her companion. Relief and gratitude shone in her brown eyes. She was beginning to feel strangely at ease with him. As she grew less self-conscious, she had discarded her Board School English, and dropped back into the vernacular.

Pretty Mollie Atkinson! Walking by Leigh's side, with the spring of a highlander, glancing up at him, now with an innocent, roguish smile, now with open eyes of wondering admiration—

"Walking in maiden wise
Modest, and kind, and fair,
The freshness of Spring in your eyes,
And the fulness of Spring in your hair."

Pretty Mollie Atkinson! Why were all the good spirits that are abroad careless of thy case? Why were all the warning instincts, that should protect a woman, dumb for thee? Why was there none to make thee heed the serpent in the grass, none to check thee as thou gavest so lightly, with all a woman's reckless tender love of giving, the jewel of thy heart and loveliness?

Presently Leigh halted. They had reached the foot of the drive of Gallowbarrow Lodge.

"Do you watch for him every day at that stile,

pretty one?" he asked, looking into the red-gold tresses which were blowing about her neck.

"Yes," she answered, proud of her steadfast loyalty. "Every day—till he comes. You see, uncle has 'prenticed me to the dressmaker at Harkerseat, so I pass there every day."

"Then I shall know where to find you."

She flushed, and looked away in confusion. "To-day was a half-holiday," she stammered.

"Oh, I see," Leigh laughed triumphantly. "Other days you will be later?"

"About six," she murmured, swinging her hat.

"You'll give me another now?"

"No! no!"

"But I deserve it. I've told you all about your brother."

She looked up at him meekly, with a smile. He kissed the proffered lips very gently; for the purity and simplicity of the little maiden filled even him with a kind of reverence. And her heart beat high in response to his tenderness.

She watched him striding up the drive till he disappeared from view, and then continued her way across the moor till she reached Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. Jake Todd was standing about outside in the orchard, waiting for her. She took but the smallest notice of him. Nor did she go straight to her aunt and uncle, as she usually did, but climbed the outside stone staircase, which gave access to her little bedroom "aboon t' hoose."

All the way home her brain had whirled in an ecstasy of hope, and a delirium of delight. Her feet had seemed scarce to touch the heather as she went.

For she was building such a castle as had never surely been built before outside of Spain. She saw herself loved and married by a rich, and handsome, and gallant gentleman, who would kiss her, and tell her how pretty she was, all day and every day; a husband who would carry her away to London Town; to live in a house with marble halls, in a grand street that was paved with gold. From the windows she would watch the Lord Mayor's coach drive up to her door every day to pay her court; and in one beautiful room, next to her own, her brother should live, and write the books which all the world would read. In the bare attic of the farm she sat upon her bed, her hands clasped between her knees, her vacant eyes staring out across the green chicken-run, her mind still busy with the delight of this wonderful dream, which was no dream, but a reality sealed upon her lips by the kisses which still burned upon her lips.

At length she rose, and opened a drawer in a little chest. She drew from it a little parcel wrapped in tissue paper. It contained the faded photograph of a boy. Tears of purest joy welled in her lustrous brown eyes.

"I'se ga'en to see thee at last, Jamie," she whispered, as she kissed the photograph, "at last, at lang last!"

CHAPTER VIII

CORAH'S GARDEN-PARTY

THE morning of the Nailes' garden-party was ushered in by a tremendous cannonade. For all unwittingly, Corah had selected for the date of her festival the birthday of the good Queen. It was always the custom of Captain Derrydoe to salute that sacred morn by firing a salvo from a pair of old cannon, ancient howitzers, which had maintained throughout the year a grim and rusty silence outside his porch. There are who declare that to fire those guns was a deed of reckless heroism comparable to any that adorns the pages of our Naval history.

But Derrydoe counted not the cost. This year of Jubilee, more than any other, he delighted his gallant and loyal heart with a series of explosions, for which he might well have had to pay with his life. "Kill the Captain" had long been his favourite form of asseveration. And if his pet howitzers should play him false, and accept his challenge in earnest, he was ready to go down, colours flying, rather than abate one grain of powder from the charges which heralded his loyalty to the dale. Pity it is, a myriad pities, that, of all the artists who yearly essay the thankless, unachievable task of depicting the changing lights

and fleeting shadows of Lakeland scenery, none ever turned aside to record on canvas that inimitable officer, when, dressed in full uniform, his drawn sword in his hand, he strutted from one ancient cannon to another and fired it, well knowing, as each in turn bellowed forth its greeting to his Royal Mistress, that it was likely to prove as disastrous to its gunner as mediæval artillery was wont to do. But no stranger, alas! ever beheld that scene of lonely heroism. The neighbours saw no reason to risk their skins in such unequal warfare. Only a terrified cook watched, year by year, in an ecstasy of nervous anticipation that almost amounted to hope, for the dreaded casualty, which, fortunately, never occurred.

This year, for the first time in history, Mrs. Derrydoe regarded the celebration with something approaching equanimity. It had long been her custom on these anniversaries to leave the house at dawn, not to return till late in the evening. By that time, it might be surely calculated that, exhausted by the exertions of the day, the loyal spirit of her spouse would have been lulled into a profound slumber, all the profounder for being undeniably alcoholic. It was through no lack of loyalty, on her part, so she explained her absence to the protesting Captain; but her nerves would not stand the strain. It was, she added, not so much the noise of the howitzers that scared her (at which the gallant officer laughed), as the dread of seeing them burst and slay their master, like any Zimri. (At which Captain Derrydoe would smile complacently, and puff his chest, and exclaim, "Kill the Captain!")

When, after the first celebration of the kind, Mrs.

Derrydoe had thus announced her intention of absenting herself for the day the following year, the suggestion had been met with an explosion of marital rage. Captain Derrydoe, like a true English husband, had denounced it as disloyal to Her Gracious Majesty, and as savouring of that poisonous newfangled idea about the rights of women, and such stuff. But, also like a true English husband, when the slow year had fulfilled its course, and the advantages of his wife's proposal, emerging like islets from a sea of wrath, had become more clear to his intelligence, he had produced the suggestion as his own. He observed casually to his wife, as the day approached that, since she disliked the noise of howitzers, it would be rather a good plan if she were to arrange to spend the day with Mrs. Cunsey. For himself, he said, he liked to have the quarter deck clear, for once in a while.*

On the present occasion, Mrs. Derrydoe, infected perhaps to some degree with the reckless daring of her consort, determined to use her day of freedom for attending the Nailes' garden-party. That was a social function which it would have been an agony to miss. But to drag her husband to it seemed beyond the possibilities. For although, after much altercation, she had succeeded in gaining his permission to make a purely formal call upon the Americans, he had rigorously insisted that their acquaintance should go no further, and he had stoutly refused to go near "that horrible feller" himself.

Alas for the plans of mice and men !

Left in unchallenged possession of his quarter-deck by the departure of that meekest of disputants, Mrs. Derrydoe, the loyal Captain devoted his time, as

usual, to the celebration of the glorious anniversary. The amazed howitzers were roused from their long slumbers. They were charged and exploded, and charged and exploded again, with reckless zeal, until the heat and excitement of the action had produced in their gunner a thirst as generous as the motive which inspired him. Then, to the thunder of the heavy ordnance succeeded the fusillade of minor arms, your true *feu de joie*, the popping of corks.

Captain Derrydoe was nothing if not a good churchman. He subscribed whole-heartedly to the thirty-nine articles, without, of course, ever having read them. But, by way of compensation, he had added a fortieth. The fortieth article was this: upon the Queen's birthday champagne must flow.

Whatever the state of the exchequer—and at times it was so low as to have ceased altogether to be an exchequer, without having ceased to be a nuisance, just as a perforated bucket ceases to be a bucket without achieving the distinction of being a sieve—on this day the Queen's health must be drunk in champagne. And mark you, drunk by all and sundry, and at the Captain's expense too, or—Kill the Captain! There was none but himself to suggest the alternative, or to perceive any advantage in it.

The cannon this day had bellowed their invitation. The ensign flew. An unusual number of villagers and farmers found occasion—quite by chance, of course—to pass the Captain's gate that morning. Each and all were summoned to follow the gallant officer up the drive. Corks popped; tumblers were drained, at the sword's point. No sword was really needed. The beverage was voted "t' richt stoof";

the Captain began to loom muzzily, in bucolic minds finely alcoholized, as a "guid laad." Allegiance was sworn to the fortieth article, nor, it was hazily surmised through a rooky vision of golden bubbles, could there be much "wrang wi' t' udder thirty-nine." Hurrah, therefore, for Church and Queen!

As the day wore on, it was seen that the supply of passers-by was becoming exhausted. They had had their "whack" and retired. But there were others, of the shier sort, not less worthy, waiting at a distance; equally willing; equally loyal; equally thirsty. They were those who by nature need to be fetched, men who require to be compelled to come in. To seek them and compel them, therefore, the gallant Captain issued forth, and patrolled the road between his house and the village. Was honest Jock Mardale going home to his dinner? By Heaven, he must go up to my house, sir, and drink the Queen's health first, or—Kill the Captain! Did quiet, steady Will Fins-thwaite happen to be looking over the hedge? He was offered the same choice between loyalty and murder. None chose to slay.

Nor did the generous host himself, that brisk Udaller of the Dales, ever hesitate, as each cork flew, to play his part, and sample the bottle. Jollity on such a day was a national duty. Your hang-dogs must drink and cheer and laugh—or Kill the Captain!

His was no callow brain. A bottle more or less, was not to upset his mature and 'stablished views of life. Tush, sir, Kill the Captain! Here's a health unto Her Majesty!

And yet upon this day of days, instead of the pure, unselfish joy, annually, hitherto, born and re-born of

loyalty, sentiment, hospitality, good fellowship and champagne, black benumbing depression gat hold of him. He had felt low when he woke. He had slapped his chest and shouted greetings to the rising sun—and only felt the lower. He had cried Ha, ha, and snuffed the battle, and the bottle, as he fired his ancient guns. But in vain. The V-shaped depression had crept slowly but surely on. Nothing could check the tide; champagne, even, seemed, as he quaffed it, to add to the growing current of misery. Well might he cry, Kill the Captain!

A retired naval officer, who indulges in hospitality beyond his means, must ever, like other mortals, be subject to such qualms. And for the last fortnight the threat of the "Bummers" had been in the ears of gallant Captain Derrydoe. It had always been part of his creed that the champagne drunk on so high an occasion must be of the best. An admirable sentiment, you will agree, when discreetly applied. A noggin of good rum, in fact, or a glass of "auld Kendal ale" would have been better appreciated by all but himself, had he known it. But he held this generous view, and had acted upon it, as kind women will sometimes insist upon deluging a Spinsters' ball with a vintage wine. The hosts, in any case, must pay, Good luck to them! That was Derrydoe's tragedy.

Hardbitten little Mrs. Sharpasse had once said of that officer that he was a perfect martyr to loyalty—whether loyalty to his bottle or to his Queen, she left you to judge. The sage opined, to both. But such loyalty must be paid for. To his immense and increasing disgust, then, Derrydoe found, upon this occasion, that his libations only served to magnify the depressing

vision of those bailiffs who, during the past weeks, had been incessantly haunting his uneasy imagination. Now it so happened that, as he patrolled the road searching for loyal guests, Mr. Sharpasse passed on his way from his office in the town to his own house.

The sight of this gentleman, whom Derrydoe always referred to in a semi-affectionate way as "our rascally attorney," revived and magnified the doleful vision of those hated Bummers, against which he had so long and so vainly been struggling. The last time he had met Sharpasse, there had been a discussion between them, on the subject of a little loan. He had introduced the subject in so unconcerned a manner, that none but the most hardened of moneylenders could have been expected to refuse to adapt the heaviness of the interest to the airy lightness of the nonchalant borrower's manner—just for a day or two.

To Derrydoe's infinite disgust, however, Sharpasse had hummed and hawed; had referred to the tightness of the money market; had inquired about securities, and generally had left Derrydoe with the feeling that he was very much disappointed in him.

None the less, on this occasion, it was the duty of the Nation to be jolly. All and sundry must be bidden as usual to drink the Queen's health at the Captain's expense, or Kill the Captain! Sharpasse, therefore, scuttling home to lunch and dress before taking his wife to the Nailes' party, was bidden to come in. Obediently he followed his neighbour up the hospitable drive.

"About that loan, you know," said Sharpasse, after he had performed his duty to Queen and Country, and

had closed one eye, and smacked his lips by way of conveying his appreciation of the excellence of the wine. "About that loan we were speaking of."

"Yes," said Derrydoe, eagerly, feeling that the duty of being jovial was at last to be rendered possible.

"I was wondering if you were going to Nailes' garden-party?" continued Sharpasse, with apparent irrelevance.

"No, sir!" exclaimed Derrydoe, "Kill the Captain, if ever you see him within the grounds of that horrible feller."

"Oh, well, I was only going to say that if you were, and if you could learn from him whether Narragansett rails were going up or down—well, you wouldn't have to think about a loan any longer. You take my tip. I'm off there myself. My wife *will* go, you know. Many thanks. So long."

The good-natured attorney was gone, leaving Captain Derrydoe a prey to conflicting emotions. His brain at first caught hazily at the idea; then, having grasped it, refused, with alcoholic fervour, to be parted from it. To attend the garden-party would, of course, be something of a concession on his part. But after all, in a thinly inhabited district, it did not do to be too exclusive. It would be easier to make the move this day than any other, seeing that Mrs. Derrydoe was out of the way, and no awkward preliminary confession as to his change of views would be necessary. Yes, it really might be worth while to step up to Gallowbarrow Lodge, and see whether that Yankee feller would put him in the way of making a few hundreds. That would be as easy as snapping his fingers for him, no doubt. And a few hundreds

would be very convenient just now. Especially as that rascally attorney was so stuffy about the loan.

He jammed on his hat with a gesture of determination, drank a final bumper to the health of Her Majesty, and shouldering his sword, swung down the drive with an air of genial swagger, crying aloud in devil-me-care tones, "Kill the Captain!"

Spring smiled upon Corah's party. The sun was so hot and the air so soft that it might have been thought that June had lent one of the loveliest days in her store, to cheer her waning sister, May. Carpets of wild hyacinths shone blue beneath the fresh green of the hazel coppices, and shared the sunlit spaces with masses of wild garlic. Primroses peeped shyly from the banks. Here and there, in favoured spots, patches of lilies of the valley gave promise of high June. Corah, grateful as she was for conditions of weather which rendered her duties as hostess easy, was chafing inwardly at the waste of a day so glorious, a day which could have been spent so much more profitably by her upon the lake or the fells. She found herself most in harmony with those of her guests who openly expressed their desire to be elsewhere.

"It's a grand day, a bonny day," said Dr. Merri-man.

"I should say," replied Corah, warmly.

"It is a day of all days," the old man pursued earnestly, "a day of all days when a man should be fishing. A real soft warm day at the end of May is not sent for idling. A good fisherman, on a day like this, could make as fine a basket as a duffer does in June when the bracken-clocks are up."

"It is doubly good of you to have come," said Corah, with a smile of appreciation for the enthusiast. "But what are bracken-clocks?"

"Our North country May-fly," he replied. "The sea-gulls will tell you when the little bronze fellows are about. The gulls come inland from their breeding-place at Ravenglass, you know, to feed upon them on the fells. And the trout go mad about them. You have only to put a cock-a-bundy on your cast, and flop it into the water, and out comes your trout. Any fool can do it. But on a day like this"—the old angler looked at the soft, feathery clouds in the warm sky, and sighed—"On a day like this, in May, a man who can watch the fly upon the water and tie his flies accordingly, could fill his creel to a certainty—a positive certainty—and have reason to be proud of it."

Corah laughed merrily. "Shall I tell you a secret, Dr. Merriman? I wish I were you, and could slip away. Because if I could, I *would*."

The old man's eyes sparkled. "Bless you!" he said, "and I will, if you really wouldn't think me rude. Anyway, I leave you my *locum tenens*. . . ."

Lancaster Syms was approaching, a little shyly. It was the first time he had seen Corah since the day they had spent upon the moor.

"It is Queen's weather," he said gallantly.

"And your Queen's birthday," countered Corah.

"My Queen," Syms began. His brain had formed the sentence, "My Queen's garden-party?"

But Leigh's voice, sniggering at his elbow, checked him.

"Miss Nailes allows no compliments."

"My Queen?" repeated Syms, repressing a start of annoyance. "Oh yes, I had half forgotten you were an American. You heard Captain Derrydoe's announcement of the loyalty of the dales?"

"It was not whispered," she laughed. "Is Dad bearing up?" she asked, turning to Leigh.

"When I saw him last he was looking very unhappy."

"That's just like the old man," Corah exclaimed, with a frank gesture of raised eyebrows and open palms. "Dad sweeps us all in here, on a day like this, half the county, and you and me. He *will* have it. He counts their heads, and gloats over their titles. He keeps us here on God's own day. And then what does he do? Make himself agreeable, and kow-tow to the Duchesses? Not Dad! He stands around in the portico, frowning and cussing, and chewing a cigar, and looking like a gargoyle. It isn't sense. It makes me madder than a wet hen. Even if he don't insult his guests, any one can see that he is hating them in his inside. And he leaves it to Mr. Leigh and me to save the situation. I don't know what people would do if Mr. Leigh were not there to protect them from Dad."

Leigh perceived himself artfully, but beyond all question, dismissed. Little as he liked to be got rid of, he could not but admire the art of his dismitter.

As he walked towards the house, where a crowd of guests were hovering round their host in a general atmosphere of *malaise*, he found himself smiling at the contrast between this capable, courageous daughter of the West, and that shy, simple, sentimental little fell-side lass, who had striven, but in vain, to find

words or means to dismiss him when he approached her; who had fallen, like a ripe cherry, to his touch, and who had known no art to conceal how her heart beat at the sound of his first words of vehement love-making. He would make up, this evening, by an hour of her company, for the boredom of this horrible afternoon.

For, apart from his dismissal by Corah, he was unspeakably bored and galled by the subordinate part he had now to play at his patron's garden-party. True enough, it was in the contract. So he went to Nailes' relief. He saved the restless millionaire from an inquisitive earl; he headed off a curious brass-founder from Birmingham; he stayed the advance of a designing Duchess by dexterously interposing a basket-chair between the shrinking financier and her overheated Grace. Nailes, with a sigh of relief, beheld her waver, frown, desist from the pursuit. She collapsed upon the cushions, and finally broke into a smile at Leigh's suggestion of an ice.

The cultured manners, and the self-confident coolness of a gentleman, trained at an English public school, at Oxford, and in the Courts, enabled Leigh to deal with the huddled mass of bored, inquisitive, supercilious guests, and even to produce a general air of ease and charm. He managed, at the same time, to convey a suggestion of his own personal sympathy with the ennui of each.

By degrees the guests grew less restive, and some even became wonderfully content, as Leigh separated them, seated them, fed them. He occupied and exercised them with bowls, lawn tennis, or the garden; and though he could not protect his patron

entirely from the attentions of his guests, he saved him from being overwhelmed.

But whilst thus outwardly charming and efficacious, Leigh was raging inwardly, at least as savage as his patron, and with a far more bitter hatred of his position. Handsome, brilliant, ambitious, the winner of the Henley Sculls, the man who, by his own unaided genius and perseverance, had mapped out for himself a career at the Bar, and in Parliament, which should never stop short of the Woolsack, it galled him to feel that he was regarded here, as what, he bitterly reflected, he really was—the flunkey of Phineas T. Nailes. For it was to Nailes that everybody present was there to pay court.

Corah, after a brief conversation with Syms, in which nothing had been said but that they wished they were walking on the fells, and which yet left them both with a thrill of sympathetic delight, had resumed her part of hostess to the crowd of strangers. But it was not this charming, beautiful, and clever girl who captivated them, any more than it was the polite and capable Secretary. They were one and all enthralled by that ugly, *chétif*, little man, who stood scowling in the portico; that shrinking, rude, insignificant little figure, that Phineas T. Nailes, whose lightest word fluttered and directed the movements of the markets of two hemispheres.

Nothing could have appeared less affable, or courteous even; nothing could have sounded less attractive or less generous than the short, snarling sentences which escaped him when he was obliged to enter into conversation with any of his guests. And yet, Leigh found time to notice, the guests who spoke

to him came away with an air of complete and happy satisfaction. The effect was so marked as to arouse intense curiosity in him.

Nailes remained in the portico, scowling hideously at each new group of guests, and nervously chewing the stump of his cigar. The gargoyle (Leigh remembered, and chuckled at Corah's simile) betrayed his uneasiness at the society which surrounded him, by muttering to Corah, whenever she came near—

“Wa-al, what now?” or to Leigh, “Say, when shall we be through with this round?”

Secretly he was proud to know that he was entertaining the British Aristocracy. But he would have died rather than have admitted his satisfaction. A true democrat, he was desperately afraid of being patronized. His idea of asserting his independence was almost openly to ridicule the visitors of whom he was secretly so proud.

The Duchess, fortified by her rest, and by the iced coffee which Leigh had skilfully piloted to her gasping Grace, through a crowd of guests—a feat which Nailes had watched with admiration—rose and advanced towards her host. Leigh, seizing his opportunity, came to Nailes' other side, and listened eagerly. To his amazement the Duchess, after touching lightly on the weather, plunged at once, with cynical directness, into American rails. A duel followed. The business man endeavoured to avoid talking business. He was over here, he said, for a rest cure. He was out of touch with business; he hated the sound of it. The Duchess was deliberate and determined. She observed that business was one of her chief amusements. It was her pet hobby,

in fact, and of all things she liked to dabble in, Narragansett rails were what appealed to her most. They went up and down like a see-saw, didn't they?

"The market fluctuates, certainly," Nailes assented sourly.

"Exactly. Now, dear Mr. Nailes, I *know* you know all about it, and it all depends on what you are going to do. Would you advise me to buy?"

"I don't give advice—ever," said Nailes.

"Oh, but, Mr. Nailes—to *me*?"

"Wa-al, Ma-am, if *I* were *you*, I *should* buy," said Nailes, with a grimace.

The Duchess smiled, and expressed her admiration for the garden and retired.

Leigh saw at once the reason for the satisfaction of Nailes' guests. His chief motive was no less obvious. He was using this opportunity to puff Narragansett rails and to give, apparently against his will, a tip which he really wished to publish. Leigh heard him mutter, "But I thank my stars, I ain't you." It would not necessarily be more than a Trojan gift, so far as they were concerned.

"Do tell!" said Nailes, aloud. "Is that a real Duchess?"

"Yes, Dad," replied Corah, who had just come up. "One Duchess, two Countesses, an Earl, and three Honourables to-day——"

"You don't say! Those ladies of the British Aristocracy? To my American eyes they look like housemaids."

"Same here," replied Corah. "But I guess they are quite the *best* housemaids. . . ."

"I can't support these lords and ladies."

Corah coughed warningly. "This is Lord Campelltown."

She introduced a tall, powerfully built man, whose clear blue eyes shone forth from a rubicund countenance.

"Pleased to meet you, sir. But I was just saying to my daughter here that I don't give a cent for a title."

"Naturally," laughed the Earl, good-humouredly. "We understand your Republican feelings—and respect them."

Nailes appeared impervious to the rebuke. "I've had occasion to size up the value of titles," he continued. "See here. When I first came to Wall Street, I had five thousand dollars. Not a cent more. So the brokers called me 'Kid Nailes.' I made a scoop. They called me 'Nailes.' I made another. They called me 'Mr. Nailes.' Another—I was dealing in thousands. It was 'Captain Nailes' all the time. Then I met my Waterloo—when Leonard J. Puggins played smash with us uptown speculators in '86—you bet it was 'Old sawed-off,' or 'that blue-headed son of a gun from Ohio,' then——"

The Earl laughed again. "And—now?" he queried.

"I guess it's not fit for publication."

"There doesn't seem much difference, after all," replied Lord Campelltown. "You change your titles more quickly in America, and no doubt merit them less. Am I right?"

"I guess you're on top again," Nailes replied acknowledging defeat with a smile, in which for once there was no suspicion of hatred or contempt. "You're

a man that can stand up, for all you're a lord. Shake! I would do you a good turn if I knew how."

Lord Campelltown laughed again. To Leigh's delight he did not beg. But neither did he attempt to turn the conversation. Leigh waited in breathless suspense. He knew that if Nailes forced the offer of his advice it would mean that he was doing so for his own sake; that he was desperately anxious to put it about that Narragansett rails were going higher.

"Do you ever dabble on the Stock Exchange?" Nailes inquired after a pause.

"I suppose everybody does who can afford it," returned Campelltown. "And many who can't."

"Becas', if you do—and I guess you wouldn't be here if you didn't, eh, my Lord——?"

"*Touché!*" laughed the earl.

"Wa-al, all I can say is, if I were you, I should buy Narragansett rails."

"Really? Then you are going to——?"

"Yes."

"It is a very generous thing of you to do. It will have a great effect upon public opinion."

"And upon the price of stock!" Nailes snarled cynically. "What's the use of talking hot air around here?"

"You *are* going to dub up, then?" a thin voice queried at his elbow.

Nailes whipped round, and beheld Sharpasse. "I never talk business with a mortgage-shark outside his office," he snapped. His thin lips shut like a rat-trap.

Sharpasse retreated rapidly behind a guard of four ladies who were supporting him, his acid spouse snapping reproaches at his clumsiness, Mrs. Cunsey,

her dark eyes dancing with delight at the directness of the snub administered by the American, Mrs. Derrydoe, shrinking and undetermined, still aghast at her own temerity, and Mrs. Stitch, the gaunt, sour-featured wife of the parson, whose thin lips and glittering eyes, faintly squinting, denoted the religious enthusiast. One looked instinctively for the sermon paper in her hand. She it was who now took up, what she would have termed, her parable.

"Will you allow me to say, Mr. Nailes, with what deep thankfulness we have heard at the Vicarage that you have decided to make such generous amends to the shareholders who suffered from your operations in America. 'There is more joy,' you know, 'in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth,' and we, in our humble sphere, join in the gladness of the Angels."

The grim and loathly aspect, with which Nailes had regarded Sharpasse, gradually changed during the course of this speech into a most inauspicious grin. His sallow complexion, and the extinct cheroot hanging from his nether lips, added to the repulsiveness of his smile, as he replied—

"I'm glad you're all glad, ma'am. But don't tell anybody about it."

The parson's wife bowed, and passed on. A smile of avarice triumphant flickered over her thin lips and sunken cheeks.

Nailes turned suddenly to Leigh. "I've no use for parsons," he said bitterly. "They are too fond of asking for Stock Exchange tips under pretence of administering spiritual exhortation. But if you want to be quite sure that a rumour will get ahead, just confide it to a minister under a pledge of secrecy."

Leigh's brain was throbbing with suppressed excitement. The millionaire's bitter cynicism sickened him, almost as much as the shameless clamour of his guests. But his excitement was due to his perception of Nailes' game. Quite clearly he was booming his stock with a false report. He would only do that in order to sell at a profit himself. His Secretary would benefit along with him at the expense of this greedy crowd of country folk. Truly the English are a nation of blatant shopkeepers. From highest to lowest they run after money, like needles to a magnet.

So his thoughts ran on, and Leigh found himself becoming virtuously indignant at the unabashed greed of his countrymen. The mote in his own eye was not visible to him in his access of righteous indignation, and in his delight at the fortune now within his own grasp.

But what was this "Bull" point in the stock, the rumour of which everybody was so anxious to hear confirmed by Nailes? Sharpasse evidently knew. He found the lawyer receiving, as usual, rebuke from his wife. She changed her tone as Leigh advanced and politely offered her a chair. She would learn, she thought, from Nailes' Secretary, what her blundering husband had failed to elicit from the fountain-head.

"Of course, it is a fine thing for Mr. Nailes to do, though it is only just and proper," she began. Leigh's air of interrogatory ignorance she discounted as correct discretion. "Everybody will think the better of him for it, you may be sure, if he does do it. But he has gone back on his promise before. Now, the question is, is he really going to do it this time?"

"I don't know his secrets and couldn't impart

them if I did," Leigh replied, with an air of candour. "But in any case you have not told me to what you are referring."

"Oh, there is no secret about his intention at the moment. He told Mrs. Stitch quite distinctly that he is going to refund those twelve million dollars he took out of the Narragansett railway by issuing scrip on his own authority alone."

"It is true," said Leigh, looking grave, "that I heard him tell Mrs. Stitch something that might be interpreted that way. But I was certainly under the impression that he gave her to understand that he spoke in confidence. May I get you some tea? No? Really? Well, I must do my duty to the other visitors."

He moved away. His brain was awl with admiration for the cynical subtlety of his employer, and delight at his own penetration of his schemes. The great broker's game was clear as day to him now. In order to reinstate himself on Wall Street, he had offered to refund part of the enormous and illicit profits he had made by manipulating the stock of the Narragansett railway. Twelve million dollars was the figure named. Probably he did intend to pay it in the end. But in the meantime he was using his proposal to "bull" or "bear" the market as it suited his own hand. As the proposal was advanced or withdrawn, the market would rise or fall with inevitable precision. Nobody but Nailes himself could know whether or when he would keep his promise. Meantime the price of the stock was at his mercy, and he had merely to buy or sell in advance of his own alternating announcements on the subject.

The plan, so admirably simple, so perfectly unscrupulous, was typical of the profound cynicism and diabolical ingenuity of the man. Once again Leigh felt himself caught in a whirl of intellectual admiration at his employer's nerve and ingenuity. "Why," he said to himself, "he will probably make much more than the twelve millions out of the fluctuations of the market before he pays it, and then he will pose as the most generous and philanthropical financier on record."

He laughed aloud at the notion. For he was flushed with the idea that he had found the key to the situation, and a royal road to fortune. He had only to watch the market rumours on the subject, and when prices rose in confirmation of the report that Nailes was going to pay up, then to sell, in anticipation of a certain fall as soon as the inevitable denial should be forthcoming.

He turned with an air of tender solicitude to Mrs. Derrydoe, who was standing shyly alone, and broached the subject of the weather to her, as gently as if it had been a bottle of '63 port. The anxious look faded from her face in response to his charming manners and the suggestion of a subject which she easily understood. Everybody hitherto had seemed to be talking stocks and shares; she had heard the Hon. Mrs. Neinzie (pronounced Ninny, remember), mention the market to her partner at croquet, and the Duchess and Mrs. Stitch speak of shares to their host himself. She felt that it was bad taste (if, indeed, it was in nature that a Duchess could show bad taste), and in any case the subject was beyond her. Now here at last was a charming and

accomplished young man talking like a Christian. Beamingly she accepted the opening.

She began a rapid survey of the past year and its meteorological records—for she kept a rain-gauge, as some women keep hens—intending to deduce therefrom the prospects for the summer. But she had not got beyond last October when Leigh was startled to observe her jaw drop, and the colour leave her cheek. At first he was agonized to think she was going to faint—a thing he hated in all women, but more especially in strangers. Then he realized that she was pointing in horror at some occurrence behind him. He was turning to look in the direction of her finger and her gaze, when a voice roared in his ear—

“Jezebel!”

Leigh swung round, and beheld to his amazement the short, portly figure of a naval officer, dressed in full uniform. He held a drawn sword stiffly to his shoulder. For the rest, no one, however charitable, could doubt that, whatever the rainfall might have been, no water had got into *his* wine.

“Jezebel!” he repeated in loud fierce tones, “What are you doing here! Kill the Captain!”

“It is my husband. He is not quite well. We must get him away from here,” Mrs. Derrydoe murmured in distress, answering Leigh’s look of surprise and inquiry. “It is the Queen’s birthday, you know.”

Leigh endeavoured to save the situation. “Mrs. Derrydoe was just saying good-bye, sir. I hope we have not detained her unduly. We could not let her go sooner.” Captain Derrydoe was only the more inflamed. “Squash me flat under forty thousand steam rollers!” he exclaimed. “What right has she

to be here at all, in this sink of iniquity? Answer me that, Jezebel? Flaunting it in the house of a damned Republican on the Queen's birthday?"

"Guess we're all in the same boat, anyway," came Nailes' quiet drawl. "The Duchess don't seem to mind, nor Lord Campelltown neither, so why should you worry, sir? After all, you are here yourself—or some of you. And as you're so surprised to see your wife, I reckon you came on your own, eh?" Nailes turned his cheroot in his mouth, and stood with his hands in his pockets between Derrydoe and his wife, smiling coolly.

"Here? Yes, I am here, sir. All of me!" stammered Derrydoe, taken aback, and fuming inwardly at having lost his opportunity of getting a tip from the millionaire. "And why am I here? You may well ask! By mistake, sir—a mistake any gentleman might make. Not to pay my respects to you, sir, nor to any Republican on such a day. You may bet your last dollar on that. No, sir, I was just luffing down the road, looking for the nearest house of call. For I happen to be thirsty, sir, thirsty, and I wished to drink Her Majesty's health. Kill the Captain!"

Nailes eyed him contemptuously. "Thirsty, are you?" he drawled. "Wa-al, then, I should advise you to uncork yourself, and take a drink."

Leigh stood a-tip-toe, and held his hands clenched behind him, fearing that the taunt would rouse Derrydoe to some outburst of violence. But Nailes had better gauged his man. He had marked the glazed eye and feebly working, flaccid mouth of his opponent. A roystering bully, there was no fight left in Captain Derrydoe. He was dominated by the

quiet, sneering little man who confronted and coolly insulted him. One of the heroes of the Wizard of the North wore, he tells us, "something like a smile on his proud brow." Derrydoe was made of meaner clay. His proud brow remained innocent of smiles. But his lips twitched, and his flushed cheeks wrinkled with a fluid, feeble, alcoholic grin.

"Uncork yourself and take a drink? That's good! That's funny! That's like Mark Twain, and all that sort of thing. Ha! Ha!" He lurched heavily. "Steady there! Captain Derrydoe, sir, may not be able to walk straight—this garden is on a damnable slope—but he can take a joke with any one. Uncork yourself! Ha! Ha!"

He bowed to the little group, saluted, shouldered his sword, and turned his wandering footsteps towards the drive, jerking out suddenly, in short, sharp tones of command, as he remembered his wife—

"Uncork yourself, Jezebel! Follow me, I mean." Then he added in lower tones, as he staggered forward, "Confound the feller! Confound the wine! Confound the bummers! Kill the Captain!"

Nailes and Leigh watched him depart, strutting down the drive with an indescribably comic air of mingled dignity and fatuousness, followed at a few yards' distance by his distressed and frightened wife.

"Bless him!" cried Nailes. "He is the only one of my guests to-day who has spoken to me without asking me for a tip. And that's becas' he is too drunk."

"But at least he was rude." Leigh chimed in with his patron's cynical speech.

"Oh yes. Thank God for that! I like his foc'sle

manners. I can tackle a man when he is drunk, or when he is giving lip. It's all this darned politeness that makes me feel like two cents. Wa-al, we're about through now, anyway, and I suppose a man may smoke in his own garden at last."

The guests had, indeed, nearly all said farewell to Corah, and were taking their departure. Leigh dashed off to help them into their carriages, whilst Nailes, with the air of a man released from Purgatory, threw away the mangled stump of his cold cigar, and lit a fresh one.

"It's almost worth while not to be able to smoke for an hour or two," he murmured placidly to Corah, as she approached. "You sort of come fresh to it."

"Well, it's all over now, Dad," said Corah, cheerily, "and I'm dancing mad to get a breath of fresh air."

The immense relief at seeing the last of her guests had left her buoyant and joyous. Not that she had not enjoyed their presence, but their departure made her suddenly aware of the delicious freedom from which they had been depriving her.

"Dr. Syms has asked me to go on the lake with him and Dr. Merriman," Corah announced. "So I'm off, if you don't want me any more."

"That's all right."

"Dr. Syms asked me to say, would you care to come too, Mr. Leigh?"

Leigh flushed and stammered. "To fish?" he exclaimed, at last, with an embarrassed laugh. "No, thanks. I've had enough of Dr. Merriman and his fishing. But—but I should like to walk down with you to the lake, if I may."

They found Lancaster Syms waiting for them at

the drive gate. They walked together as far as the village, when Leigh left them, explaining that he had business at the post-office, and was going back to the house when he had finished it.

Corah and Lancaster Syms walked on in silence—a slightly embarrassed silence. To break it, the latter presently called the attention of his companion to the old fence that bordered the highway. It was composed of massive, upright slabs of green slate.

“Like rows of tombstones,” Corah cried.

“Yes,” he laughed; “they must have been quarried from the Old Man yonder, and they have probably never been touched since they were first erected—hundreds of years ago, perhaps. Each of those slabs is probably four feet in the ground. Look here! This is the reason why they never have shifted.” He showed her how each stone was dovetailed with the next.

“It is a lost art now, Dr. Merriman tells me. More’s the pity! For they make an absolutely permanent, rabbit-proof frontier, and they give a characteristic look to the country, too. But when you realize that each of those slabs takes three men to lift it, and that they have to be sunk and fitted as neatly and as accurately as if they were half-inch boards, you’ll understand why the art has been lost in these days of scarce labour and impoverished landlords.”

So talking they reached the lake and were welcomed into the boat by the ardent old angler.

“All the world and his wife were at your party to-day, likely?” Dr. Merriman remarked as they rowed down the lake.

"Oh yes," Corah assented. "And especially that dear old Mrs. Cunsey. You know her well, of course?"

"Aye, since I was a lad."

"Is it really true about her? Do tell!"

"Nowt truer."

"She really did?"

"Run away to be married at Gretna Green? Surelie. That was common enough in those days. Why, if you search the parish registers, you'll find mighty few weddings recorded here seventy years ago. It's ower near to Gretna Green for that."

"And I've heard you say that there were mighty few burials in some parts too," Syms suggested.

"Aye, at Loora! Forbye, they were nearly all *hanged* at Loora!" The doctor roared with laughter and delight, as he once more had the satisfaction of exercising his wit upon the neighbouring village. For there was always keen rivalry between Loora and the market-town.

"Did those run-away matches turn out well as a rule?" Corah wondered.

Some better, some worse," the Doctor replied. "Like many others. Though I do mind me that when old John Atkinson was courting Jane Todd, and asked her father whether it was to be t' smithy or t' kirk, Jane's mother chipped in with, 'Nay, lad, I've hed three sisters and twa daughters married by t' Smith, and it's nae ta'en weel wi' any o' them! T' Priest mun hev a try wi' Jane.' But marriage is a gamble anyhow, I reckon—a hitty-missy job at best."

"The prizes are worth having, though," murmured Syms.

"Mebbe; but, kirk or smithy, a man's chances are equal."

"It's awfully romantic though—the Gretna Green way," said Corah.

The old man's head was bent over his tackle.

"It was a way of showing their independence of spirit," he replied, "when young ladies' parents kept too heavy a hand on the bridle. Nowadays they elope with the grooms, and get married at a registry office. And that's all the differ."

"But there's nothing romantic about a registry office," cried Corah, indignantly.

"Why not?" asked Syms. "Not that I am likely to trouble either parson or registrar, myself, as things are," he added, laughing. But there was an undertone of bitterness in his gaiety.

It was an unlucky sentence. He was thinking of the impossibility of his aspiring, with his few hundreds a year, to the hand of the millionaire's daughter. Corah interpreted it as a direct announcement to herself, that he had lost his heart to some other woman—cruel and callous she must be, she thought—whom he worshipped, and must worship all his life, but in vain.

"That's enough metaphysics," Dr. Merriman broke in quickly. "It's not theology we're talking, anyway. Let's get on to the fishing."

He flung the bait far into the water, skilfully, on a tight line.

CHAPTER IX

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

LEIGH when he left Corah and Syms, had entered the post office and dispatched a telegram to his brokers, instructing them to sell the large block of shares in the Narragansett Railway, which he had recently purchased, so soon as they should have risen five more points.

There was an air of supercilious satisfaction on his proud handsome face as he left the village, and in his dark eye there flashed a look of anticipation as he strode towards the moor. It was a look which boded little good for the maid who kept the trysting hour at the stile where first she had met her lover.

Mollie sat upon the fence, gazing down at the little group of farms in the valley below, which were half concealed now by a veil of yellow and green, the golden rain of blossoming laburnums and broom, the foliage of golden ash-trees, and of copper-beeches just turning from green to red, and of giant oaks changing from bronze to green. Her hat hung upon the post, and her thick tresses curled over her neck and shoulders, glistening red and gold in the westering sunlight. She was peeling a rosy-cheeked apple, as she waited for her lover, and all her attention was

concentrated upon the endeavour not to break the lengthening coil of apple-skin. Suddenly Leigh's steps broke upon her ear, as he came round the bend of the road. She started, and the peel broke.

"There!" she cried, laughing through her annoyance, and holding up the broken coil for Leigh to see. "You made me break it! But never mind! Perhaps that will make the letter come right."

So saying, she swung the peel slowly round her head, and, the very prettiest and most innocent of witches, recited the following incantation—

" ' Pippin, pippin, paradise!
Tell me where my lover lies,
East or West or North or South,
Keswick, Kendal, Cockermouth? ' "

As she finished the verse, she flung the peel at Leigh's feet. Mollie laughed aloud, and clapped her hands as she saw that the rind looped and curled itself into the shape of a capital L. She looked at Leigh. Then a deep blush crimsoned her cheeks, and to the child's open gaze succeeded the downcast look of maidenly confusion.

"Good!" cried Leigh, "an L, you see! I accept the omen, Mollie mine. Come along, little girl, and tell me where you learned those pretty lines."

Obediently she allowed him to lift her from the stile, and to take the now accustomed toll of her lips.

"Oh, we always do that when we peel an orange or an apple," replied the child. "But you'll have half?" She cut the apple in two, and proffered it to Leigh.

"Thank you, my pretty Eve," he said.

"Do you really think I'm pretty?" she asked,

looking up at him with an air of the most innocent pleasure in the compliment, and munching the apple with childish enjoyment.

"Assuredly. Don't you like me to think so, little one?"

"Very much, indeed. But I am not quite sure that it is true. You see, you are the first person who ever told me so. Of course, Jake *looks* as if he thought so, and Uncle always calls me his 'bonny wee lassikin.' But then he is so fond of me."

"Not fonder than I am," said Leigh, tenderly. "Let's go up on the fell yonder, and watch the sun set over the tarns."

They turned to the left off the road, and struck across the moor, making for a thick plantation of larches which crowned the ridge above them. They penetrated the wood until they came to a spot whence they could see, through the openings in the trees, glimpses of the still blue waters of a tarn lying beneath them, and its fir-fringed shores beyond. The grass and bracken close at hand were pied with the white and gold of flowering hawthorn and broom and gorse. In the far distance, the green slopes of Walna's Scar ran up to the rugged *arrête* of the quarry-scarred Old Man. Along the foot of the mountain a straight line was drawn by Coniston water. The peaceful lake shone, like a stream of molten silver, through pearly mists, mists which on the horizon melted into clouds touched to gold by the setting sun.

Gold and silver and pearls! All the colour and glory of the lakes set in their coronet of mountains were not more lovely than little Mollie Atkinson in her brilliant girlhood. Gold and silver and pearls!

All the wealth of the world was not more precious than the pure love of that innocent maid, which the callous man at her side was preparing to take and stain and spurn, in the baseness of his passion and the folly of his indifference.

Leigh seated himself beneath a tall straight larch, upon a carpet of brown pine needles, through which the sprouting bracken was beginning to thrust green heads, like tiny croziers. The intense stillness of the fir woods affected Mollie's spirits. The hollow croak of a huge solitary raven, as he oared his flight across the valley from Yewdale Crag and Tilberthwaite, intensified the silence.

Mollie shivered. "How quiet it is!" she said. "It makes me feel frightened."

"There's nothing to be afraid of, little girl," said Leigh. "Come and sit here, close to me, and we'll talk of what we'll do when you are married and go to see your brother in London."

"Oh yes, how lovely! Do tell me!" cried Mollie.

She curled herself up by his side, as a child who waits to hear the most delightful of all the fairy tales.

"When we are married, we'll live in London, and have a beautiful house and a coach like the Lord Mayor's, and Jamie shall live with us, and—and—and——"

"And we'll live on kisses and buttered toast!"

Leigh laughed gaily, and drew her closer to him, playing with her curls, and kissing her lips and eyes.

Across the opalescent waters of the tarn, the sun, dropping in the north, flung a pathway of burnished

gold. The sharp tops of Crinkle Craggs flamed up, blood red.

The sun went down, and the stars came out, one by one, in a primrose sky. The young moon rose over the dark crest of the Old Man. And still the lovers lingered in the wood; and still they talked of love, and the happiness that awaited them. Side by side they lay upon the warm, dry bed of pine needles; the helpless, trusting, loving girl at the mercy of dominant, brutal, deceiving man. Above them shone the stars, their nuptial torches, twinkling in the blue firmament, through the feathery branches of the silent trees. . . .

They said "Good night" at last, and again "Good night"—the long and languorous parting of united lovers. For her, more than a little dazed and frightened, his kisses yielded an ecstasy of romance and love. "She was one made but to love, to feel that she was his, who was her chosen." For him, it was an ecstasy of the senses to press those soft, cool, yielding lips in yet one more kiss of farewell. Leigh, cold in spirit, passionate in nature, experienced indeed a certain tenderness, born of gratitude for physical delight, towards this little rustic girl, who had just given her all to him in trust, with a woman's supreme, unselfish abandonment; but he felt withal a larger contempt. With his exultation at his triumph over her was mingled a sort of condescending pity for her weakness, and her folly, in trusting him; pity so well controlled that it could be relied upon never to cost him a penny or a pang.

For such men as Bertram Leigh there is often, in this world, a large share of apparent success. If they

enjoy it, and do not pay for it here, mankind can but fall back upon the hope of a hell hereafter.

“ You, that have learned, O tell me the wisest men are sure
Life ends not here in dust upon earth, one course once run,
But still our souls, our senses alive, ourselves endure,
And the weight swings back with wrongs redressed, and justice
done! ”

CHAPTER X

A VILLAGE GALA

It was June, high June, sweet June, flaming June! Corah, in her garden, thought that last epithet well chosen, as her eye wandered from the roses and violets to the rhododendrons and Ghent azaleas in a blaze of brilliant blossom.

And outside the garden the world was abloom. Beyond the hedgerows, which were wreathed with honeysuckle and wild roses, Corah could see great patches of brilliant purple on the fell sides, where myriads of foxgloves had sown themselves after a coppice had been cleared the preceding year. The countryside had not yet put on that monotone of green which renders July and August the least attractive months of the year in Lakeland. It was still near enough to budding-time for each tree to proclaim the idiosyncrasies of its foliage. The various shades of green were broken here and there by a splash of yellow, where golden ash or golden elder, or a cloud of whins and broom intervened. The wild cherry trees and rowans and elders were still afoam with white blossom, and the hay-fields were as white with ox-eyed daisies as are the meadows of Provence when pied with narcissi.

Corah sat in the garden, gazing at the scene. She was listening to the whirring music of the hay-cutter which ascended from the rich meadows in the valley below. But chiefly she was wondering whether Dr. Syms would be passing on the moor that day. More and more often, latterly, she had found herself wondering the same thing with an ever-increasing admixture of hope.

By Leigh she was alternately attracted and repelled in a high degree. There were times when she admired him immensely for his presence, and for his accomplishments, and his quick, vigorous brain. There were times when she feared and despised him, realizing that he was, on one side at least, morally and intellectually akin to her father. This morning he had been particularly charming. For the first time, for some weeks, he had been taking obvious pains to please her, both by words and by the little politenesses which count for so much in a woman's eyes. At first Corah had been glad because, after her firm snubbing of him, he had ceased to pay her attention. Then, woman-like, she had begun to experience a little pique at his complete coolness and indifference. For during the last few weeks he had been pre-occupied, all unknown to her, by his passionate pursuit of Mollie. She had responded, therefore, very readily to his advances this morning, fascinated by his charm of manner, and some brilliant talking for her benefit. And now, having done so, her thoughts turned back to Syms, and she felt as if she had been guilty of a little disloyalty to him. It was absurd, of course; she was not bound to him or anybody in any way. She did not mean to be—and Syms

had made it plain enough that she was nothing to him. So she told herself. But conscience pricked for all that, and love gave her the lie, though gently.

But Syms came not. And Corah waited, dreaming in the hot sunshine, surrounded by her white pigeons, which perched about her hammock, or sought the shade of the pink may-tree, beneath which she reclined, till Leigh appeared with his usual sheaf of telegrams and letters, and proposed their customary walk to the post.

She was looking extraordinarily beautiful in this setting of summer. Leigh was not slow to perceive it, or to proclaim his homage by glances of frank admiration.

"Dad seemed as pleased as a dog with two tails this morning. He has quit picking on me for this one while," Corah observed, looking at the telegrams in Leigh's hands. "He must be selling somebody, that's a cinch!"

"He has been selling largely on the recent rise in Narragansetts, and must have made a mint of dollars. I suppose it is no secret, for *you*. . . ."

"Dad knows I don't blab," Corah replied. "But then he knows I won't help him either, so he doesn't talk business to me any more. You see," she continued frankly, "he used to get me to put things about for him that he wanted believed—rumours that affected the price of stocks—until I found out what it all meant, and since then I won't have anything to do with his business."

"And what does it all mean?"

"Dollars for Dad and ruin for everybody else he came across, as well as thousands of poor honest folk

—the fatherless and orphans and widows—whose money was invested in the concerns he dealt in. It always ended that way. I am afraid it always will. Mr. Leigh——” she stopped and spoke to him in her direct impetuous way, with a frank and deadly earnestness. “Don’t you ever get led away into thinking you will make money by following Dad. You can’t do it—nobody can do it.”

Leigh was struck to silence for one moment. The next, he laughed lightly in a rather superior manner. For had he not already made thousands? And had he not in his pocket at that moment a telegram ordering his brokers to buy again when the stock fell, as he knew it would, thanks to Nailes’ heavy selling?

“No, I don’t try to follow him,” he said lightly, adding to himself, “I *anticipate* him. That’s how I am going to make a fortune.”

For all that, his confidence was slightly shaken by Corah’s warning. He hesitated for a moment as to whether he would send those instructions to his brokers, after all. Nailes, Corah’s words reminded him, was as inscrutable as he was unscrupulous; and he had himself told Leigh not to dabble in his stocks.

Perhaps it would be wiser to be content with the few thousands he had already made. But no! The few thousands were of little use for his ends; but as a means to an end they were invaluable. They would enable him to cover the purchase of a huge block of shares; to hold them, if need be, for a few months even, until eventually the market moved up again, when Nailes should once more see fit to talk of re-funding those twelve million dollars. Then Leigh,

himself a comparatively rich man, would be in a very much better position to approach his intended father-in-law, and to propose the terms of the bargain, terms which should be immense. So he determined, as he walked on, talking gay nothings to the girl at his side. And, determining so, he fixed the fate of Corah, her father, and himself.

They found the village *en fête*. It was the day of the annual gala, locally known as "t' galey." In a field at the far end of the little town a merry-go-round with a steam-organ was making day hideous, and numbers of children who rode upon its revolving white horses, sick. In the centre of the field a circle was marked out with white chalk. Round the edge of the field another circle indicated a measured third of a mile. A pistol was fired. A score of men, some in stockinged feet and trousers and shirts, others in crimson, black, or yellow shorts and running shoes, began to race round the lap.

Corah saw that Dr. Syms was acting as starter, and that Dr. Merriman and Mr. Sharpasse were holding the tape to judge the finish. But what captivated her attention was the sight of scores of schoolboys and youths busily engaged about the field, wrestling, all practising the falls which they were presently to put to the test in deadly earnest.

"They're neither to haud nor to bind," said Dr. Merriman to Corah, as she approached. He was looking censoriously at the youthful wrestlers. "Is that the way to husband your strength on a June day? The Loora lads are not throwing away their chances like that. And if they win the belt to-day——" The prospect was not to be compassed in speech. Corah

followed his glance to where a group of "foreigners" reclined upon the grass, waiting quietly for the wrestling bout.

"Perhaps they are like the German waiter I have heard of," said Leigh, "who, when a wager had been laid by an English guest that he, or any other German could drink a pailful of beer without a pause, would not take up the challenge until he had first left the room and made the experiment in private. Then, confident in his powers, he returned and swilled another pail in public. Your wrestlers look to me as if they were preparing in the same way, doctor, and let us hope they will be as successful."

Amidst the laughter which greeted this anecdote Dr. Merriman and Mr. Sharpasse stretched the tape between the winning posts, for the third lap of the mile was nearly finished. A powerful, lithe runner, clad in a zephyr and black knee breeches, was finishing the mile strongly, some twenty yards ahead of the next. There had been cries of "guid la-ad," and much encouragement of the second runner during the last lap, until it was seen that he had shot his bolt and was hopelessly beaten. It was Jake Todd. For a month he had trained nightly, running secretly on the fells, in the hope of compelling Mollie Atkinson's admiration. But he must yield to a better man. The winner finished in almost silence, only a few visitors and the Loora contingent applauding. But the applause of the latter was deep rather than loud, as of men in a hostile camp, not deeming it wise to be provocative.

For it was the Loora champion who had won. So much, indeed, could have been read by the knowing,

upon Dr. Merriman's disgusted face. So much Mollie Atkinson's indignant and contemptuous reception of the unhappy Jake too surely indicated.

The rivalry between Harkerseat and Loora was deep, bitter, and of long standing. It amounted almost to hatred, and was always liable to burst out into a riot, issuing in bloody noses, at a moment's notice. The origin of this feud, more bitter than is usual, even amongst neighbours, is lost in obscurity. Some attribute it to an ill-advised demonstration of Loora's contempt for Harkerseat's chief treasure, the Girt Clog; some trace it to the first occasion when a Loora champion threw a Harkerseat hero at the annual sports, and carried off a wrestler's Belt which had long been regarded as the certain heirloom of the market-town.

These were Loora versions, but the men of Harkerseat, when questioned, would tell the tale of that ancient day of humiliation when mine host of the Chequers Inn had advertised in Loora an approaching total eclipse of the sun, which (so the advertisement announced) would be visible only from the parlour of the Chequers Inn at Harkerseat. And, so it was averred, the whole adult population of Loora had come forth to see it, driving to the favoured spot in char-a-bancs extravagantly chartered for the occasion.

A preliminary round of wrestling was now held in the centre of the field, and, after that, a fell race, to the top of the crest on the opposite side of the valley and back, across bracken, rocks, walls and becks. In this race the Loora mile runner once more easily out-distanced the rest. The Harkerseat men looked glum.

But their thoughts were soon distracted by the music which sounds sweetest to a dalesman's ears. The whimpering and baying of over a score of hounds, leashed and coated, and led into the field by their owners, farmers and cottagers from ten miles round, proclaimed the hour of the hound trail.

Lighter and smaller than fox-hounds, these dogs were all bred especially for speed, and were all fine-trained for the event. A couple of fields away a man trailing a bag of aniseed could be seen approaching, finishing the drag. As soon as he reached the beck at the bottom of the Gala field, Sharpasse fired his pistol. The straining hounds, who had been held between their masters' knees, were loosed from their coats and leashes, and tore away at top speed along the line of the drag, tails up and waving, heads down to the trail. They raced along the bottom, over ditch and hedge, through copse and spinney, in a frenzy of speed and eager rivalry. Soon, a mile away, they began to breast the hill, straggling out into a long line of white and liver and brown dots. The men watched their hounds almost in silence, now and again, as the leader was passed, yelling forth the name of the leading hound, "Belle!" "Mayblossom!" "Thruster!" or "Meg!" "Guid dog! Guid lass!"

Then the hounds disappeared over the horizon of the fell, and for a quarter of an hour the crowd waited in eager silence, broken only by a boast, a laugh, the taking of a bet. Suddenly two miles away on the right, a white spot appeared—instantly detected and recognized by keen-eyed shepherds—then another and another. Racing down the rough fell-side the long line of hounds came into view, separated now by greater

intervals, and occasionally one could be heard giving tongue. "Meg! gie ower wasting thy breath, silly bitch," muttered her owner, quick to recognize her voice even at that distance.

Four hounds were leading when they came to the high stone wall of an intake on the fell. The first hound rushed at the wall, failed to top it, and fell back; recovered and rushed again at the obstacle. He cleared it this time, but he had lost the race. A herd of sheep in the field scattered in headlong flight as the pack rushed through the intake. The first three hounds were now close together, streaking down the fell. The second and third, it could be seen, were slowly lessening the distance between them and the leader. Cries of encouragement broke forth, the excited owners yelling to their hounds at the top of their voices, whistling and screaming and waving their arms whilst others shouted to their favourites, "Guid lass! Guid lad!"

The leader was being slowly but surely overhauled. Still there was now only one field and the beck to be crossed. If she ran straight, she could scarcely be caught. But for a few yards she lost the scent—ran wide—then, hearing her master's voice, she turned to run in and leaped at the beck. But by losing the trail she had struck the stream where it broadened out towards the lake. She fell into the water, stopped, swam, struggled out—and was beaten. The second and third hounds running neck to neck, had kept on the trail. They leaped the beck at the narrowest part and rushed up the field to their masters, who were kneeling in a row some yards behind the judges. The excitement was terrific; the din immense. A

dead heat seemed certain. But a yard or two from Dr. Merriman one hound shot ahead. His verdict that Belle had won by a head was never challenged.

"The old man kept his head well," said Leigh, approvingly. "It is not such an easy thing to do. An excitable judge has been known to declare just such a race as that to be a dead heat by half a length!"

"Champion! champion!" a deep voice sounded in Corah's ear. "That was a gey fine do, Miss Nailes! A gradely race, surelie!"

She smiled her greeting to John Jackson, who stood at her side, wrapped in a huge shepherd's plaid.

"Aye, so it was," said Syms, cheerily, for he, too, had made his way to their little group. "But we'll see a finer soon when Girt John throws Larry Martin-dale."

"Mebbe," smiled the giant, "I'se in fine fettle, I'se allow."

Sharpasse was now busy calling out names for the second round of the wrestling, and the company moved towards the ring.

"We've won the wrestling under sixteen, but Loora lads have won the mile and the fell race, John," said Dr. Merriman as he joined them. "It'll break my heart if thou's laid down."

At this moment Corah's attention was attracted by a very old woman, who was hobbling slowly with the aid of a stick towards the round-about.

"Hallo, Mrs. Tyson," cried the doctor, as he caught sight of her, "what ails thee?"

"Nowt, thank ye, doctor," she replied. "Eh, but they'se fine—t' horses, ye ken!" She pointed at the

revolving steeds with her quavering stick in an ecstasy of childish delight.

"Aye, but I'm fashed that Michael is not here to see them," said Dr. Merriman, kindly, and added, turning to Corah, "Mrs. Tyson has just lost her husband."

"I'm so sorry," said Corah, sympathetically.

"Aye, aye," replied the old woman, with a disconcerting stoicism. "But it's nae sic a girt loss, neider. He was nowt to naebody, was Michael, this five year gone. Sae deaf, he couldna' hear; sae blind, he couldna' see; sic a cripple, he couldna' walk. Nowt tae naebody, was my Michael." She paused and wiped a rheumy eye. Then she continued, in a shrill piping tone of complaint, "And wi' him scarce cold an' a', t' horses mun coom tae toon. He might hev deid any day, sista, and they might hev coom any udder day. Says I, I'se off til t' horses, awivver. And hyar I be, doctor."

Dr. Merriman laughed. Then he hummed and hawed.

"And who is left to watch him?"

"Watch him?" the old woman echoed, with a short laugh. "A cripple like yon? He'll bide safe eneuf, wull Michael, I'se warrant. I'se left naebody. I joost locked him oop, an' then."

The chief event of the day was now at hand. The feebler wrestlers had been sorted out in the first round, and there remained now about a dozen men, the pick of Harkerseat and the neighbouring dales, who were soon paired off, and ready to be at grips. A few wooden benches were set round the ring, upon which Corah and the other ladies present took their seats.

Upon a plain deal table were displayed some silver cups, prizes for the races, and a broad leather belt, richly embossed, the coveted trophy of the wrestlers. Within the ring a couple of giants were at grips, watched by the judges, Dr. Merriman and Sharpasse, who knelt upon one knee on the grass, in order to obtain a better view of the men's feet and hands. Outside the group of intent spectators, sometimes indeed at their feet, scores of urchins, from six years of age and upwards, were imitating the champion in the ring, gripping and throwing each other, and practising strokes and holds.

The "wurstling," as it is termed, proceeded after the fashion which Corah had seen at Lone Micklethwaite Farm. It was not long before the final round was reached. "Girt John" Jackson, the Harkerseat hero, and holder of the belt, was left to face the Loora champion. A hush fell upon the spectators, and the little boys ceased from their wurstling to witness the great event.

"Girt John" and Larry Martindale rose from different quarters of the field, threw off their cloaks, kicked off their boots, and advanced to the ring, clad in the traditional costume of the wrestlers, thick tights, loin cloths, garters below the knee, and stockinged feet. The immense weight, strength, and breadth of the men was clearly revealed. Syms smiled as he heard Corah draw a short sharp breath of admiration and surprise. He drew her attention to their length of arm and their extraordinary nimbleness of foot.

"Girt John scales seventeen stone and his chest measurement is forty-eight," he said. "But George

Steadman, the old champion, weighed eighteen stone and a half, measured fifty-one and a half inches round the chest, and had a calf of nearly eighteen inches. And yet he was nimble as a kitten in the ring. Larry is lighter and smaller, but he is very quick and clever, and a very fierce wrestler. Girt John is not so young as he was. I am a bit anxious."

The two wrestlers shook hands, then bending their bodies at right angles to their legs, and each resting his head upon the other's shoulder, they threw their arms about each other, and began to circle round, moving warily, manœuvring for position before taking hold. Soon each had linked his fingers behind the other's back. A "hold" was called. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, with a sudden application of his full weight sideways, Larry had his man off his balance. Thrusting forward his right leg, he flung him to the ground.

There was a groan of disappointment from the onlookers, broken by a yell of triumph from the Loora lads. It was a fluke, the Harkerseat men stoutly declared, and Girt John would soon be even with his man.

But Girt John had been severely shaken by the fall, and when he rose it was seen that he limped. His knee was rather badly wrenched. Though he struggled gamely for a while in the second round, the issue was never really in doubt.

Bitter and unforgettable was that moment to the men of Harkerseat, as they saw their champion "laid doon," and knew that the belt must pass to Loora's keeping.

Bitterest of all, to Dr. Merriman, who yet must

hide his chagrin, and praise the victor, even as did the vanquished.

"T'was gey clever foot work, awivver," said Girt John, as he shook hands with his conqueror. "An' I mun be gitten old and slow."

The Loora lads received their hero with a torrent of cheers. One of them pressed upon him a bottle of whiskey from which he took a long draught. It was foolishly done. The excitement of his triumph was already sufficient; the draught of fiery spirit mounted to his brain.

"Wha's next? Wha's for 't?" he cried exultingly. "Girt John's laid doon to me. Wha'll try anither fa' wi' t' champion?"

Skill, strength, and agility go for much in wrestling, but temperance in victory, as in training, counts more. Mind triumphs over matter in this, as in all the finest manly sports. So Martindale was to learn in the very hour of his triumph. He heard Syms speaking words of comfort to Girt John.

"You would soon have turned the tables, if it had not been for that unlucky knee."

Larry Martindale swung round, proud, contemptuous, and defiant.

"Nay, doctor," he said. "It's mainly what t' udder way. An' if *thou'st* nae content, I'll wurstle wi' thee for t' belt."

Syms flushed, and a shout of derisive merriment went up from the Loora lads.

Syms looked up, and saw that Corah was watching him intently.

"Very well," he said quietly. "I'm your man. That's a bargain."

"Good lad!" cried Dr. Merriman in ecstasy.

"Aye, he's jannock," murmured Jackson, approvingly.

It was a desperate undertaking. But Syms knew well that he could not decline that challenge, in that presence. Moreover, he did not altogether despair of success. Since the day when he had wrestled with Jackson for Corah's amusement, and had won the giant's praise, he had had many a fall with him, and had learned much. The champion was always eager to practise with him, and he had taken pains to teach him many a trick and stroke. Syms was much above the average of ordinary men in weight and strength. But in this district, where a tall race of hardy men have been fed on good "poddish" and "haver" bread for generations, he was small in comparison to such prodigies of bone and muscle as Jackson and his like.

Martindale, however, was nearer his own size, and though he was evidently an exceedingly clever wrestler, Syms had some hope that that pernicious draught of whiskey might affect both his wind and his judgment. He was clearly much excited, or he would never have risked the hard-won belt. And whilst Syms was fresh, Martindale had already taken part in several severe bouts.

Endeavouring to suck out some little confidence from these reflections, Syms took off his coat, waistcoat and boots, and, with as composed an air as he could muster, entered the ring and shook hands with the champion.

They lost no time in getting into holds. For Syms was determined to let his opponent take his hold first, and not to allow him to wear down his strength by

the pressure of his superior weight. Martindale, somewhat careless and contemptuous, soon linked his fingers behind the smaller man's waist. Syms quickly followed suit. Making his own hands fast, he immediately endeavoured to lock the feet of his opponent. Martindale was too quick for him, however, and regaining the freedom of his legs, planted them firm as a Colossus. Then raising the lighter man off his feet, he whirled him round, amidst shouts of applause.

But he failed, as Jackson had failed at the farm, to break his grip and throw him off his chest. On the contrary, Martindale's own breath came short. Hope sprang high in Syms' breast as he felt the hot gasps of his opponent's breath on his cheek, and was aware that his legs were beginning to tremble. Devoting his own attention to maintaining his grip, he prepared for his effort when he should come to ground again. The moment his feet touched earth, he exerted his whole force in a side thrust. Martindale had intended to do the same. Man for man, muscle for muscle, if each had now exerted his full strength at the same moment, as each intended to do, Syms must have lain down to his opponent. But he was in good trim, and his mind was incomparably the better trained of the two. He had recovered his balance a shade sooner than Martindale. And the message which instantly flashed from his brain, called forth response to the uttermost. From every muscle of his body, perfectly co-ordinated, an explosion of energy concentrated upon the crucial point, in one direction. What was even more important, the summons to his muscular energy was issued and obeyed far more

quickly than that which the slower brain of Martindale, now slightly disturbed by alcohol, had sent forth. The fractions of seconds so gained, and the properly timed and complete concentration of his muscular effort, turned the scale in favour of the lighter and weaker man. To the eye of the spectator it seemed that, scarcely had Syms been allowed once more to touch earth, when the Loora champion tottered and fell sideways, fell with as little warning and apparently as little cause, as a hollow, top-heavy elm will sometimes fall,

“O’erturned by the upper airs,
On what one might have deemed a still summer’s day.”

Syms himself was hardly more astonished than his opponent, and he was much less fatigued. After shaking hands with Martindale, he walked, amid deafening cheers from the Harkerseat men, across to where Corah and Leigh and Merriman and Jackson were sitting. Corah’s look of pride in him would have put life into a dying man, he thought, and he was very far from feeling like that, though very hot. He found himself now more collected, more confident and readier for the next bout than he had been for the first.

“Bravo! Guess that will brace you up for the next,” cried Corah, correctly gauging the significance of his flushed cheek and clear blue eye, and admiring, more than it had ever entered into her head to do before, the strength and figure and grace and bearing of an athlete victorious.

“Guid lad!” said Jackson, softly, “Guid lad! Thou’s laid him doon gradely. Noo, dinna be ower quick in gitten intil t’ holds, sista.”

"But he's stronger than I am," said Syms, in surprise.

"Aye, but he's shorter i' t' breath, what wi' t' whiskey an' a'. Thou'lt tire him oot, if thou tak'st my tip."

Syms remained doubtful, but as Dr. Merriman urged him to follow Girt John's advice, he decided to do so. Now it happened that Martindale had determined to follow the same policy and to play a waiting game, hoping to tire out his active adversary, and to win by virtue of his superior strength and weight. The result was that both men moved round and round about the ring, their arms every now and again swinging loose and then meeting round each other's backs, but never coming to hold.

There was something ludicrous, especially to the uninitiated, in this solemn waltzing of two gigantic caterpillars, as Corah remarked, with their heads resting on each other's shoulders. But, in reality, as every man and boy knew, as they watched with breathless interest, there was a silent contest of wits and endurance going on, and a steady exchange of muscular pressure. The perspiration poured down the wrestlers' faces. Syms found himself wondering how long he would be able to endure. To his surprise, however, he did not grow exhausted. He was buoyed up by an extraordinary exultation and confidence resulting from the first fall, and by an absolute determination to win the belt for the honour of the dale, and for the sake of the fair American who was watching him.

As they completed the circuit of the ring for the ninth and tenth time, he knew that he was getting

his second wind; that, after a period of weakening, he was stronger and fitter than at the outset. At the same time, he was aware that his adversary was breathing more heavily, and that his legs, when he stamped them on the ground, were growing less and less elastic.

Syms then made good his hold. Martindale, accepting the challenge, clinched too, and swiftly advancing his heel, endeavoured to throw his man. The manœuvre very nearly succeeded. Syms just—and only just—succeeded in maintaining his feet. Then, swift as lightning, he made a counter-attack upon the enemy, whose sudden advance had thrown him off his balance. Summoning to the effort every ounce of strength he possessed, he lifted the big man off his feet, making as he did so a half-turn to the left and shooting forward his left leg, so that he could bring the whole of his weight to bear sideways on the body in his arms. There was a second of immense strain; the struggle of a beaten man; then, after what seemed an age, Syms felt Martindale's fingers loosen behind his shoulders, and he threw him full length on his back to the ground. It was a clean and pretty fall.

Amidst tremendous cheering Syms was presented by Mrs. Sharpasse with the belt. He stood half bewildered at his success, thrilling with delight at his victory. He had never in his life achieved so fine a fall.

"It was a piece of luck," he said to Corah, in answer to her congratulations, smiling at her excited looks and flushed face. "I have never got into such a good position in my life before."

"That'll be becus I nivver let thee tire me," said Girt John, with a smile. "Thou had'st Martindale fair foundered before ye began."

"I believe you are right," said Syms, heartily. "And if you didn't win the belt with your wrestling, you did it with your advice."

"Aye, aye," replied the honest farmer, beaming as though he had never known defeat. "I told thee to tire him. It's wi' wurstling as it is wi' politickles—I'se nae wrang that often. It's maistly what t' udder wa-ay. I'se nae an obstinate man, an' I'se nae a conceited man. But I'se been on t' richt side sae lang an' sae often, that I doan't richtly kna' hoo I could be wrang."

Then Syms felt himself seized by a dozen strong arms, and, amid volleys of cheers, he endured the most embarrassing and uncomfortable thing that can happen to a man. He was carried shoulder high by an admiring throng through the village to the market-place.

He struggled desperately, and in vain, not to be made "a silly ass of," as he would have put it. Corah, watching his flushed, good-humoured countenance bobbing and ducking among the arms and shoulders of his admirers, felt a thrill of admiration that was not a little tender.

Admiration and tenderness betrayed themselves, to one close observer, for one brief moment, in her softened eyes and heightened colour. Quickly she repressed her feelings. With a bitter pang, she recalled that declaration of her hero, that he would never marry. She disguised from herself the thwarting of her own desire, by an access of indignation

against the folly and unworthiness of the woman who was ruining that splendid fellow's life.

She turned to Bertram Leigh, and listened to his brilliant chatter, as he escorted her home to Gallowbarrow Lodge.

The official programme was over. The dalesmen, who had walked from afar, and had run and wrestled, might have been expected to be content to rest, before returning to their distant homes. But many of them now sought relaxation, at the end of the long summer's day, by entering with zest into a competition to decide who could walk to the top of the neighbouring fell in the shortest time, carrying on his shoulders "twa girt stee-ans," two enormous slabs of slate, each of which it would have taxed an ordinary man merely to lift.

CHAPTER XI

A MOUNTAIN WALK

THAT evening, for the first time, Leigh failed to keep his tryst with Mollie Atkinson. Long and patiently she sat and waited, listened and wondered, beneath the pine-trees overlooking the tarn. She watched, in the mirror of the silent water, the inverted crescent of the moon drift across the star-lit sky. Wonder, that he came not, filled her trusting soul, till that wonder gave place to anger, that he should treat her love so lightly. Then fear gripped her heart, fear lest some accident might have befallen him, mingled with the chilling dread lest he should have grown careless of his tryst.

The moon disappeared behind the sharp edge of the mountain-tops. Mollie Atkinson shivered and started up. Two large tears fell from her round cheeks, upon the pine-needles, and glistened there, like stars, in the moonlight. Not till she had reached home, and had clambered up the little outside stone staircase that led to her bed-chamber, did others fall. Then, kneeling by her bedstead, she flung her arms round the pillow, and burying her face therein, gave way to an abandonment of misery and tears.

Leigh had remembered the tryst well enough.

But Syms' success at the gala, and the admiration for him which had shone all too plainly in Corah's eyes, had brought him suddenly to a stop. He had amused himself—very pleasantly indeed, he admitted—with the little rustic girl. But Corah was "business." He had not the least intention of letting her slip through his hands, to be snapped up by a country doctor. She was much too valuable to be wasted on that ass Syms. Besides, apart from Nailes' dollars, she was incontestably a magnificent creature, beautiful, sensitive, intelligent. In almost every way, she was worthy to be the wife of Bertram Leigh. So he appraised her. Love? No, he did not love her. To be honest, he was much more in love with pretty little Mollie. But Corah's frank admiration of Syms had stung him to that jealous emulation in the chase, which takes the place of love with such men. It had roused at once his passion and his intelligence. He determined to spare no effort to make up for lost time, and lost opportunities. Henceforth he must devote himself, heart and soul and brain, to the capture of Corah Nailes. After all, Mollie Atkinson was his, and he could well afford to let her wait till he wanted her again. He did not want her just now.

So Leigh devoted all his energies that evening to entertaining Corah as he escorted her home. And, whilst Mollie was sobbing her tender little heart out upon her pillow, her lover lay revolving schemes for ensuring that Corah Nailes should see much of himself, and nothing of Syms for a while.

Fortune gave him the opportunity he sought. For next day was Sunday. And it happened to be part of Nailes' scheme of life to attend church on the

Sabbath. He suffered, in doing so, untold agonies of boredom. But, so he informed Leigh, he had sized the thing up, and concluded that, as a matter of business, it was worth while. Regular attendance, he declared, as they walked solemnly to the temple of God, disarmed criticism, and put you on a par with the best people.

Leigh chuckled over the admission. He reflected that his patron little knew how well aware he was of the grounds for criticism in this case. A clever man, Leigh was so taken up with the superiority of his own understanding and mastery of the situation, that he failed to see that such a phrase, falling from the lips of such an one as Nailes, indicated, really, that he was in his power. To be confided in by Nailes, meant that he despised you.

In moods so little Christian, Nailes and Leigh followed Corah as she clambered up the steep pathway leading from the village through the graveyard, to the ancient church.

An hour and a half later, limp and exhausted, the trio emerged. They walked round to the end of the church, and sat for a moment in silence upon the low slate seat which ran the whole length of the exterior beneath the great east window. Upon that seat, tradition has it, the men of yore would sit and wait till the mule-pack train came in sight, on its way from Kendal to Coniston, and over Wrynose Pass to Hardknott Camp, the Furness Fells, and the Port of Ravenglass, bringing back from beyond the mountain barrier of Skiddaw, Helvellyn, and High Street, the produce of the outer world, in exchange for the wool and ore of the dales.

Nailes cared for none of these things. He looked vacantly to the left, where at intervals between the coppices, on rising ground or through gaps of moorland, the sinuous high road to Ambleside gleamed white. He looked to the right, where the tortured cattle, escaping from the stinging flies on the shore, stood still, knee-deep in the blue waters of the lake. He looked and groaned and heaved an abysmal sigh. For an hour and a half—it seemed a century—he had been suffering an enormous purgatory of ennui. Between alternating fits of treacherous somnolence and intellectual exasperation, he had listened, whilst Mr. Stitch had faithfully enunciated the firstly, secondly, and thirdly, drawn up by his forbidding spouse; had heard him finally recapitulate her observations in reverse order, portentously elaborating the obvious, the irrelevant, and the absurd; disastrously over-emphasizing the wrong words, and maddeningly insisting upon the impossible conclusion that the whole of his congregation, whatever its virtues, was irrevocably condemned from its birth to roast for ever in the hottest of fires. It might possibly have been maintained, by the all-knowing, that, of all those who heard this terrible denunciation, Nailes and his Secretary were best qualified for the future of torment, which the preacher assigned so impartially to all but 144,000 of God's creatures. Unhappily they were probably the two members of the congregation who winced the least.

"I'll lay my bottom dollar on one thing," groaned Nailes, when he at last found words. "And that is, that preacher will come to a good end."

"Don't shoot at the man in the pulpit," Corah

answered. "He done his level best." Her flippancy disguised the outrage he had done to her more Christian feelings.

"But what a best!" Leigh interjected. "That sort of thing makes me feel marvellously profane."

"Guess you're a bit of an agnostic or an atheist or something naughty, Leigh," sneered Nailes.

"What is the difference?" asked Corah.

"Agnostics," answered Leigh, "are people who don't believe in anything—except their own ignorance."

"And atheists?"

"Oh, they do not believe even in that! But if the sermon we have just suffered, or the Athanasian Creed, is the kind of stuff one has to listen to when one goes to church, then my altars are the mountains . . ."

"That sounds very pagan," Corah interjected.

"Perhaps. But say a good Pagan."

"A good Christian ought to be a *very* good Pagan?"

"Exactly. Let us try next Sunday whether a walk on the mountains would not make us feel more at one with the universe, more in tune with the Infinite."

"Same here!" cried Corah, enthusiastically. "What do you say, Dad?"

Nailes frowned hideously. Then he drew his cigar-case from his pocket, chose a cigar, bit the end off, lit it, puffed at it, frowned still more villainously, took the cigar from his lips, and looked at it, and then at last, turning to Corah, he replied,

"Dad's unanimous!"

"Bully for you! Where shall we go, then?"

"Right away. Somewhere out of reach of mails and cables," Nailes answered, throwing himself apparently into the mood of the young people.

"Perhaps Captain Derrydoe can tell us where to go," said Corah, smiling at the veteran, as he appeared round the corner of the church.

His hat was in his hand, and he was mopping his brow with a large bandana handkerchief. Corah felt it necessary to draw him into the conversation, for the smile, which she had converted into one of welcome, had been provoked more naturally by his appearance.

More, even, than was its wont, Captain Derrydoe's hair was standing erect to-day. Derrydoe's hair was of that order which requires to be brushed straight back from the forehead, and, even so, rapidly recovers from the brutal surprise of the brush, like grass in May, that has been lightly trodden under foot. Here your hyper-critic will find fault. It is misleading, he will point out, to talk of Derrydoe's hair in the singular, or to liken it to a hay crop. A field of oats on a rough fell side, if you will. For Derrydoe's hairs, any schoolboy could see, were few enough to compel you to refer to them in the plural, like discoveries. They sprang like daisies in the grass, "cut down, and up again as blithe as ever." That is better! Well, make it so. In moments of emotion the hairs of his crest sprang up from Derrydoe's scalp. That was all I meant to convey. And this was one of those moments.

The particular cause of the particular emotion which had caused these particular hairs to spring erect upon this particular scalp of Derrydoe, was not so much the presence of the "bummers" in his house,

though those harbingers of the law in its less agreeable form, were, indeed, with the summer "y comen in." For, as supernumerary occupants of the Englishman's castle, they had proved, if we ignore the first violent protests of the outraged householder, surprisingly tolerable. They were tactful and unobtrusive, if scarcely urbane. Their patriotism had been demonstrated to be beyond reproach. And if their bodily presence necessarily conveyed the offensive and impertinent suggestion that it is not part of an Englishman's birthright to live beyond his means, still they were no doctrinaires. They did not carry the absurd theory which they personified to such a length in practice as to refuse to drink whiskey which had not been paid for.

No! It was not the bummers who had caused Captain Derrydoe's hairs to stand on end, like wind-swept remnants of a larch plantation. Nor was it the sermon, of which, to tell the truth, he had not heard a word, and would not have understood it, if he had. It was, directly, St. Paul, and, indirectly, Mrs. Derrydoe. The former, in his epistle, had declared to Derrydoe's protesting ears that "it is better to marry than to burn." The latter, by her outrageous innovations and disobedience, had just clearly proved to him that it was not.

"For consider, Sir! A woman! A married woman! A woman of her age! A decent woman! Pyjamas! I ask you! Ha! Ha! Pshaw!"

No wonder, you will say, his hairs were standing on end.

The sensitive reader will long ago have perceived that Mrs. Derrydoe, the most down-trodden of women,

as she appeared to the general, was yet woman enough to get her own way on occasion. Though her gallant spouse had long and loudly sworn to hang her to the yard-arm of the sign-post, as we have seen, if she left his house on the Queen's birthday, she had yet succeeded for years in escaping from the annual, nerve-shattering explosion of the old howitzers, and the concomitant alcoholic patriotism of her husband. Though he had pledged his word and honour to throw her into the lake, if she dared to call upon Corah Nailes, yet had she called. And so, muzzily, had he.

And now, upon another point, she had scored another victory. Speaking as a married man, the incredible had happened. Mrs. Derrydoe—I confess the subject is indelicate, and the fact, as deplorable as it is inexplicable—had become enamoured of the idea of wearing pyjamas. Here, you may trace the demoralizing influence of the stage in the towns, and of shopping by post upon our innocent countryside.

These things—these abominations, as Derrydoe phrased it—these pyjamas—pshaw!—were being, at this time, much worn by ladies on the stage. No theatre was complete without them. (I should think not, indeed, or what is a Censor for?)

The prosaic fact remains. Captain Derrydoe might sniff, might stamp, might bang the door. He did all of these things, as any married man would. But he was a mere man, when all is said and done. And men may furiously rage together in a golf club; but they imagine a vain thing if they suppose that they are going to influence their wives in the matter of fashions. In spite of sniffs and pshaws, and stampings and bangings, Mrs. Derrydoe's mind persisted

in dwelling upon the possibility of pyjamas. She did not, indeed, underrate the enormity of the change she contemplated. Being, by nature, timid and virginal, she rather overrated it. But upon what different lines the minds of man and woman work had been revealed to Captain Derrydoe that very morning.

The subject had been broached for the hundredth time by Mrs. Derrydoe over the Sunday breakfast sausage ; an institution as honoured in the observance as hitherto that other had been, which she was now preparing to discard. But when Derrydoe, also for the hundredth time, had broken forth into denunciations of the indecency of the things, of their innate hideousness, of their mannishness, of their suitability to a woman who smokes, and wants a vote, Mrs. Derrydoe merely paused for a moment in her study of Harrod's weekly catalogue—the *Sunday Times* of our country cousins—and had observed reflectively—

“They say the only drawback to them is that they are rather draughty. . . .”

“Draughty ?” echoed her infuriated spouse.

“Yes. They say they rather tend to—to ruck up. . . .”

“Pshaw !”

“And that, of course, besides being very uncomfortable, would be hardly proper, would it ?”

“I have been endeavouring, Madam, for six weeks to convey to you my opinion of the things.”

Mrs. Derrydoe beamed delightfully. “Yes,” she said, “I know. But I had a brilliant idea in the night.”

“Oh, indeed. And what is it, pray ?”

"I am going to have mine made with stirrups."

"*Stirrups?*"

"Yes, stirrups. To prevent them rucking up. What do you think of that?"

Captain Derrydoe thrust back his chair, and rose from the table.

"What do I think of that, Madam? Stirrups? You may wear *spurs* too, if you choose."

There he paused, and thrust his fork into a surviving morsel of sausage, which, in his haste, he had left upon his plate, and which he would not willingly let die. Holding it balanced in the air, he contemplated it for a moment very tenderly. He gazed upon it with the sentimental look of a man regarding an only child, scarce rescued from his burning home. Then he consigned it to the immortality of his being.

"You may wear pyjamas, and you may wear stirrups, and you may wear spurs, if you choose, Madam," he continued, half choking with emotion and sausage, "but I warn you, I *warn* you, Madam. The moment you desecrate our chamber with such heathenish night-wear, I leave this house for ever!"

So saying, he banged out of the room. Not a little proud of his climax, he had seized his hat and hymn-book, and strutted off to church, well-knowing that Mrs. Derrydoe would have a headache and would not dare to follow. In such a mood he was ripe to listen to a "Little Minister" denouncing women. Instead, he had been condemned to listen to an epistle of St. Paul, hedging upon the subject. "It is better to marry than to burn!"

It was in such a mood that this injured and

rebellious husband found himself appealed to as guide, philosopher, and friend, by the bewitching daughter of that horrible American feller. It had long been his habit, when the conjugal barometer at home set stormy, to sally forth, knapsack on back, for a walk among the lakes and mountains. The worst anti-climax in life is that of a husband, who, having left the house in a tiff and banged the door, has presently to return without any definite idea as to how he shall continue to make himself sufficiently unpleasant to his wife and yet maintain his dignity. Captain Derrydoe's solution of the problem was on the whole a wise one, seeing that he was a man incapable of apology. He was wont to absent himself for a week's walking tour and to return healthy, hearty, happy, and forgiving. His air of forgiveness was then so frank and magnanimous that his wife, relieved of her anxiety by his return, and challenged by his magnanimity, had no choice or desire but to welcome and forgive.

Such a crisis, as we have seen, had just arisen. And Captain Derrydoe, conquered by Corah's bewitching smile, forgot all his prejudices. There was, besides, at the back of his bewildered brain, a hope of extracting a hint from this horrible American millionaire, which would free him for ever of the bailiffs and black financial care.

In five minutes the whole party were discussing with eagerness the project of a walk to Wastdale.

"But why should we wait till next week?" cried Corah, fired with enthusiasm at the prospect. "Let's start right away, Dad."

"To-morrow morning, if you like," Nailes assented.

"Will you really come?"

"I should say."

"And Captain Derrydoe will go along and show the way?" That smile of hers and her dancing eyes would have melted an icier heart.

"Delighted, I am sure. I will be at your drive-gate with my knapsack at ten o'clock. You had better bring some sandwiches. We are certain of fine, hot weather. Look there!" He pointed to the outline of the hills, scarce distinguishable through a haze of lilac-blue and opaline.

"So that's fixed up. So long."

Thus it happened that this strangely assorted quartette set forth upon the morrow to achieve what is, perhaps, the most superb mountain walk in Europe.

Nailes had his reasons for this expedition; Leigh and Derrydoe, as we know, had theirs, apart from their genuine appreciation of scenery. Corah alone was attracted solely by the pure joy of the open air, the call of the mountains and the lakes, the grandeur and romance of the moorland track, and the overhanging crags.

If the expedition was to prove eventful for her, and fraught with fate, she had no premonition of this fact. Whilst each of the men set out with a load of care and schemes and calculations in addition to the burden of their knapsacks, Corah stepped lightly on to the rugged track, with heart and mind and body as clean and fresh and pure and joyous, as the curlew that piped above them, as the becks that purled over the stony courses at their feet.

They stopped, of course, on their way, at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. There they found Mrs. Jackson sitting by the fire, stirring a bowl of porridge.

"It's hoamly but it's guid," she said, explaining the dish to Corah, after welcoming her guests with a warning that they would all be in their beds with rheumatics. "It was a terr'ble lang trod to Wastdale. 'Twas in Cumberland, she had heard tell, an' nowt guid cooms ower t' Raise, foak said. Aye, we're auld-fashioned foak i' these parts, I'se warrant. We like what's guid, like, and we like what we like, like. Poddish, noo! Aye, they're grand food, poddish."

She fell to stirring the bowl again, while Corah played with the baby, and Nailes chewed his cigar.

"Poddish that thick that a mouse med wo-alk ower 'em dry-shod, were what Girt Hugh Aird o' Troutbeck was bred on——"

"An' t' sunny side o' a wether, when he could git it," added the farmer.

"Sae he told t' King," said Mrs. Jackson.

"What king was that?" asked Corah.

"King Edward sixt'," she answered.

"Lang whiles syn, yon would be," observed Jackson.

"Ere ever t' Romans crossed t' trod. T' King sent for him, sista. A giant was yon."

"A girt wurstler."

"Aye, champion!"

"Forbye, he douned a lock o' Scottish raiders single-handed, as you med say, a' aleean, wi' nobbut but hissel'. I'd fain hev seed yon. Aye." The memory of the Troutbeck giant always warmed the enthusiasm of the farmer.

"T' King sent for him then, sithee," Kate continued. "And gave him Troutbeck Farm for his ain."

"He broke his heart clearing it, awiver," added Jackson.

"How was that?"

"He wud tear up t'oaks by t' roots, single-handed, like, as you med say, aleeen, wi' nobbut but hissel'. Aye, he was terr'ble strong, was yon."

"Forty twa when he died," said Kate. "Nobbut a chicken."

"He was buried i' Troutbeck. You can see his grave to this day."

"Not i' t' kirkyard, ye ken," Jackson explained. "There wud be nae room for a giant i' t' sepoolchre, I reckon. He was buried i' t' hog-hoose intak',* was Girt Hugh Aird."

It was evidently a favourite subject. Corah would gladly have stayed to listen to other stories of this favourite hero of the dales. The farmer and his wife, it was clear, were in the mood to tell. But the sun was high in the heavens, and their long walk was scarce begun. Regretfully therefore she shouldered her knapsack and took her leave.

Leigh had remained outside. His quick eye had caught sight of a petticoat disappearing into the cow-byre upon their approach.

Mollie stood there, petulant and defiant, her elbow resting on the side of a fat cow. She challenged him as he entered.

"Are you tiring, Bertram?"

She had no heart but to speak to the point. And her voice, which began haughtily, ended in a sob. The blue eyes, which had blazed with injured pride softened already with love and tears.

* Enclosure containing a sheep shelter.

"No, dearest," Leigh answered quickly. "Never, my bonny wee thing! But I have but a moment. We are going for a few days' ramble, and I shan't be able to see you for perhaps a week. There's no time for quarrelling or explaining, Mollie. Only just time for a kiss before I go. You'll give me one to show that you forgive and trust me, won't you? Quick!"

She was so adorably pretty that he marvelled at his self-restraint in having sacrificed one single evening with her. Still, business was business. Her loving heart overflowed with gratitude when she found her lover, passionate and kind, ready with an excuse, and eager for her kisses. Hearing him she banished resentment and forgot her pride. She came towards him, her hands by her sides, and stood on tip-toe to offer her red, upturned lips. He pressed them to his. And standing there, in the steaming byre, his arm round her slim waist, he sang to her in low thrilling tones Allitsen's setting of Lytton's passionate lyric—

"Since I loved thee yester-eve,
I do love thee, Love, believe,
Twelve times dearer, twelve hours longer,
One dream deeper, one night stronger,
One sun surer, thus much more,
Than I lov'd thee, dear, before."

Simple, direct, pure, romantic, inarticulate, the little farm girl thrilled in response to this virile, accomplished, voluble lover. This man of men, so it seemed to her, could, like that beloved poet-brother of hers, say and sing without effort, all her inmost thoughts, all the yearnings and ideas which lay in embryo in her heart, but which she could neither

formulate to herself nor utter forth to the world or him. This man could express the inexpressible. When he did so, she for the first time realized how much she had been longing for such expression.

And Leigh, acutely conscious of his own effectiveness, and of the romance and strangeness of the situation, derived the sharpest pleasure from the contemplation of this pretty rustic child in the squalid cow-byre, who responded so pleasingly to his cultured and compelling courtship. It is an everyday story, alas ! And an everyday story it will remain, so long as men are blinded by selfishness and vanity, and spurn the goods the gods provide.

So this callous, self-indulgent man stood for a few moments in the reeking cow-byre, and toyed with the most divine of human things, a woman's heart, given to him. Then he must leave her. For they heard Corah, Nailes, and Captain Derrydoe emerging from the farm house, and saying farewell to Mrs. Jackson. Her aunt's querulous voice in the porch, prophesying ill, spurred Mollie to snatch another kiss and then another for forgiveness and good-bye, and another for "haste ye back."

And then he was gone.

Her heart was full and throbbing with happiness ; her lips were yet tingling with her lover's kiss. But as she watched Leigh disappearing over the fells at Corah's side, a spasm of jealousy and a stab of foreboding shot through her sensitive heart. And again the blue eyes filled with silent tears.

"What hasta, Mollie ?" a deep voice questioned at her side. "What's agate ?"

Concerned at her sorrow, jealous of the cause,

eager to make known at once his sympathy and his disapproval, silent Jake Todd had found these words to convey his meaning. Few words could have been less happy, few occasions less auspicious.

Stung to resentment by his presence and interference, as she deemed it, Mollie turned upon him. Her flushed face and flashing eyes heralded her anger.

"Nowt tae dew wi' thee, Jake Todd! What for dosta mak' a buddy joomp, shootin' i' my lug tha-at wa-ay? Thou's gi'en me seckan a turn, thou medst fell me wi' a fedder."

Taken aback by her wrath, the unhappy Jake blundered into the truth which tortured him.

"I'se thinkin' m'appen thou an' sumbuddy's thick as inkleweavers, an' a'."

"Nowt o' t' mak'," Mollie answered sharply, whilst a deeper blush bewrayed her.

"I'se not yan to see t' cat i' t' dairy, and wonder what it's efter," Jake retorted.

"Sithee, thou's yan mun hev thy neb * i' ivvery-buddy's business, I'se warrant."

The conversation was taking a turn which Jake had not in the least intended. He struggled for words to soothe Mollie, and to recall his devotion to her. He wished he had had ready one of those heaven-sent sweets, which bear tender sentiments and words of devotion stamped upon them, and save a man the agony of conducting a conversation with his lass. But not having one, he must speak for himself.

"Hasta forgotten oor Sunday wo-alks, an' a', Mollie?" he began. There was a quaver of reproach, mingled with affection in his deep tones, which might

* Nose.

have served his turn under happier circumstances. But words and tone alike were merely exasperating to Mollie in her present mood.

"Thou's rantin' mad, sure-lie," she replied, stifling a guilty conscience in an outburst of indignation. "There's no end til thy ideas. I'se not wantin' thy coompany ivvery hoor o' t' day, Jake Todd," she looked up at the clear sky. "It's a grand day to lait kindlin',* I'se thinkin'."

The manly fellow shook his head, and retreated in confusion.

"That caps a'," he muttered as he went. "Forbye what, I'se nae yan for betty-work, or owt o' that. I canna mannish sic a roosy-cheeked bit o' a winch as yon. I mun joost hope for t' best, awivver, an' then."

The walking party dropped quickly down into upper Yewdale, the green wooded valley, named after some ancient Scandinavian hero, belike, which curls beneath the rocky slopes of Oxenfell. Crossing it, they struck up over some rough moorland, past the head of the lovely wooded vale of Tilberthwaite, and emerged into the head of Little Langdale near Fell Foot. They paused to admire the picturesque old farmhouse there, half hidden beneath huge yew trees. It was the last house on what used to be the main road over Wrynose Pass to the Roman port of Ravenglass. Stories of the smuggling days still hang about that old steading, like cobwebs around a bottle of vintage port.

Derrydoe pointed out Signal Rock, high up in the gap of the pass, whence, he said, the coming of the

* Collect firewood.

pack-horse cavalcades used to be announced to the farmhouse at Fell Foot, in order that the brewing of the ale might be begun for the refreshment of the travellers. And he told them, too, how, in the days when the smugglers used to "git their stoof fra' Scotlan', land it somewhar aboot St. Bees, and bring it awa' inland on their pownies, auld Nannie Martindale at Fell Foot" was long the plague of the excise-man. Once, when some smugglers with their brandy kegs had been traced to the farm, the "preventive men" entered the place. There was no sign of the smugglers or their goods. Only "auld Nannie" sat upstairs in state, her great skirts outspread. Sure of their prey, the gaugers allowed the old dame to talk, protest and scold for half an hour. At length they persuaded her to move. Sure enough, there was a barrel underneath her. But, lo! It was empty. It covered a hole in the floor through which the smugglers had escaped with their kegs.

But the spot has memories older than those of the smuggling days. A curious terraced knoll behind it is thought to have been the Parliament house—the Thing-mound—of the Viking settlers. Here Corah proposed that the party should stop and eat their lunch. But Captain Derrydoe urged them to walk on for a little distance yet. So they made their way across the beck which flows from Blea Tarn into the Brathay. Their guide chose a spot above, and half-way between, Blea Tarn and Little Langdale Tarn.

Here there broke upon them the surprise of the Langdale Pikes. Broad-based and strongly buttressed, those lusty twins, two giant pyramids of rocks, rose side by side in sudden grandeur above the small sharp

tooth of Side Pike. Tall, solemn, sheer, like the western spires of a cathedral, they were connected by a lower ridge with an eastern tower, Pavey Ark. Like a lioness couchant, guarding her whelps, they seemed to watch over the little grey farms which nestled in green, friendly Langdale beneath. Silver streaks of falling water outlined the glistening crags and deep purple gullies.

The pedestrians threw down their knapsacks and contemplated the short, springy turf which was to be their divan, uttering the sigh of relief and delight characteristic of the wayfarer on the open road.

Grasshoppers chirruped around them among the green brackens and junipers on the fell side. The transparent beck tinkled over the grey-green stones below. And from the marshes about the tarns could be heard the drumming of snipe, and their shrill piping. Above, the larks rose into the summer sunshine. Careless of the lonely curlew's fluting, heedless of the timorous peewits' melancholy call, unconscious of the distant raven's croak, they pursued their trembling flight, to sing their song of joyous ecstasy at Heaven's gate.

Beneath the cloudless blue sky the tarns below mirrored the green slopes of the fells, and the scattered trees on their shores. Save where the springing reeds and bulrushes broke the surface of the water, it was hard to tell where mountain ended and tarn began. Beyond rose the purple, heather-clad peak of Lingmoor, shutting out from view the lower reaches of Great Langdale, the yew-shaded cottages of Chapel Steel, and Elterwater with its grey homesteads half-buried beneath huge green sycamores

and the gigantic slag heaps of its green slate quarries.

Whilst Nailes was unpacking the lunch, and Derrydoe and Leigh were fetching water from a neighbouring rill, Corah took out her map and studied it. She began to realize that they had reached the centre of a vast ring of mountains, set within a ring of mountains still vaster. They had penetrated, as it were, into the inner sanctuary of the high fells, and Corah experienced something of the mingled awe and rapture of a devotee in the Holy of Holies. As one of our own poets also has said :—

“Within the mind strong fancies work,
A deep delight the bosom thrills,
Oft as I pass along the fork
Of these fraternal hills.”

Her reveries were interrupted—they would never guess how disagreeably—by the return of Leigh and Derrydoe, both balancing drinking-cups filled with water.

“That’s bully!” cried Corah. “I’m as dry as the Sahara.”

“But let me advise you not to drink this water neat,” said Derrydoe, very seriously.

“Why? What’s the matter with the water, anyway?”

“Oh, it has great advantages in this country,” said Leigh. “But it is much too good to be wholesome.” He took up Derrydoe’s parable, and played with it quizzically, holding the cup of water tantalizingly before Corah’s eyes and looking admiringly into them. “Morally and financially water is admirable. It costs nothing. And it gives your teetotaller

the spiritual reward of thinking himself superior to other men. No doubt he is. But he usually feels worse. There is a moral and intellectual uplift about cold water denied to the humaner beverage called beer. But the inner (and older) man unhesitatingly prefers beer."

"Or whiskey," interjected Derrydoe.

"The worst thing you can possibly do on a long walk," Leigh continued, "is to drink from these delicious cold springs and becks. Many a man suffers acute indigestion and spoils his days in the mountains, through not knowing that. There's a warning written by a wise man—even if he was a poet—in one of the hotel books about here, which ought to be taught in every Board School. It goes something like this:—

" ' Full many a climber, strong and bold,
Has gone to his sarcophagus,
Through pouring water, icy cold,
In floods down his cesophagus.' "

"That's right," Derrydoe chimed in. "Our climate here is sometimes damp and the water is always cold. But we know a cure for both." From a capacious flask he poured a generous allowance of whiskey, and, with a grudging and unsteady hand, faintly tinged the amber spirit by the addition of an infinitesimal quantity of water. He offered the potent mixture to Corah, who fortunately refused it. Then he imposed it upon Nailes. The financier seldom touched alcohol. But he was thirsty, and he desired to be polite. He took a generous gulp. As the result, he choked, sputtered, wheezed, and coughed for five minutes. Derrydoe pressed him to take some more.

"Guess not!" said Nailes. "If it's a choice between

fire and water, I plump for drowning every time. The darned old piece of two by four!" he added in a mutter beneath his breath. Then he continued aloud, "It's good to have a bit of geniality like you, bubbling around in our midst, Captain Derrydoe. Captain Derrydoe radiates geniality like the otter of roses radiates from the otter. Don't he, Corah?"

"Oh, Dad, what a break!" exclaimed Corah, and resumed her study of the map. Leigh, when they had finished their sandwiches, came to her side, and helped her to identify the mountains which surrounded them.

"It is like sitting amid the ruins of an old Roman amphitheatre at Arles or Nîmes," he said, "only here there are mountains for walls. It makes one feel so infinitesimal. That's the massive rounded crest of Wetherlam behind us, isn't it? And the conical peak of Coniston Old Man beyond?"

"Yes. And there is the track, zigzagging up Wrynose Pass on the way to Hardknott and Harter Fell, to the valley of the Duddon, and Eskdale and the sea."

"That's right. And these must be Crinkle Craggs a little further round."

"Sure! They are crinkly, aren't they?"

" 'Crinkle Craggs their title take,
From the outline that they make,' "

laughed Leigh, "though doubtless there is some more scientific derivation of the name I know nothing about. Well, then, there's Pike o' Blisco and Great Knott and Black Crag and Cold Pike."

"That sounds refreshing to-day. How I love the

names they give these fells! They are as strong and straight and telling as the Pikes themselves."

"They are mostly Norse, I believe. They say, you know, that the dialect in these parts bristles with Scandinavian words, and that those who know the Cumbrian tongue can read a Norse Bible."

"You don't say! Well, let's go on with our map. There across the valley opposite to us, are the Langdale Pikes, of course, Harrison Stickle and Pike o' Stickle. And that's Lingmoor, with the purple ling on the top, and away to the right is Loughrigg, overhanging Grasmere and Rydal Water."

"I see."

"That is the inner circle pretty complete. And the outer ring of high fells is grander still. The Old Man, Wetherlam, Bowfell, the Scafell Range, Great End, and Great Gable. Some we can see, and we'll take the rest on trust."

Leigh's quite genuine and unaffected delight in the scenery of Lakeland formed a bond of union between him and Corah, which, when it was uppermost, as it was now, caused her to forget much that she instinctively shrank from in him. It served him in good stead at this crisis in their lives. The pair separated instinctively from Nailes and Derrydoe, who had begun to talk finance. And this order was naturally maintained when they shouldered their knapsacks and resumed their walk in the direction of Dungeon Ghyll.

Leigh, talking simply and at ease, and displaying his joy in the open road, and delight in the colouring of the fells, began to gain favour in her eyes. He was much more likely to find the way to her heart

so, than by elaborate cleverness or sentimental courtship. It was just such a companion as this, handsome, athletic, and endowed with a keen, quick, simple sense of the poetry of nature, that she needed as a refuge from the distasteful atmosphere of deliberate antagonism, and disagreeable finance, which surrounded her father. She felt in unison with her companion and was grateful for the harmony of his mood.

Nailes seemed to favour this arrangement. Corah, overhearing scraps of his conversation with Derrydoe, as he walked on, eyes glued to the ground, concluded that he was glad to have any one to listen to his one absorbing theme of stocks and shares and dollars.

He had roused his listener's expectations and excited his cupidity to fever point by remarking, with a bitterly humorous cynicism, which was his nearest approach to geniality, that any boob could see that he was nosing around for a slice of hot-dog, and he should have it, or burst. Then he amused himself by talking to this innocent as if he had been a shark on Wall Street or a tough in a New York saloon.

And Derrydoe, supposing that this was the chance of a life-time, was stumbling over the rough track, listening open-mouthed for a gilt-edged hint, and struggling desperately to stem the tide of facts and figures, probabilities, and provisoes with which the millionaire incomprehensibly inundated him.

They struck down into the head of Great Langdale. On their right front, under the precipices of Pavey Ark, they beheld Mill Ghyll, dropping from Stickle Tarn behind a veil of ferns and rowan trees, and the grand force of Dungeon Ghyll plunging down its perpendicular ravine. Then, turning to the left, they

pursued the road along the bottom under Pike o' Blisco, until it died away first into a green cartway along the foot of the fell, bounded by an old stone wall, then into a narrow sheep track. For two miles they wound their way over the grassy levels and green strath of Mickleden. They crossed numerous rills, which stream down from Harrison Stickle and Stickle Pike to swell the rushing waters and to deepen the clear green pools of Great Langdale beck beneath.

At length they reached a solitary sheep-fold near a series of moraine heaps, the deposits of by-gone glaciers, at the foot of a steep ghyll. On their right a faint track could be seen winding up by the side of a mountain torrent. It was the way over Stake Pass to Borrowdale, Captain Derrydoe told them. Their own path lay straight ahead, up the deep gully of Rossett Ghyll, which is divided from Stake Pass by the steep crag called Rossett Pike. The smooth, sheep-cropped turf was now increasingly broken up by stones and boulders which had been split off by the frost and rolled down from the clear-cut peak of Bowfell and the bold, rugged scarps of Crinkle Crags on their left. They began to ascend the green tongue which projects from Bowfell and splits the valley in twain. They skirted enormous boulders, and stumbled over steep hummocks of grass, stepping now on emerald clumps of parsley-fern, now on strips of stag-horn moss, until they struck into the precipitous, stony bed of a dried-up watercourse. Ferns, bracken, and rowan trees, stunted oaks and wind-scorched thorns, growing in the clefts of the crags, hung in air above them.

It was intensely hot. No breath of air stirred in the shelter of the gully. They had left far below them in the valley the song of the chaffinches and the larks, the yellow-hammers and the greenfinches. An occasional stone-chat or wagtail was the only visible sign of life. Their own chatter had gradually ceased, as the influence of the hill-tops, at once benign and oppressive in their grandeur, irresistibly asserted itself. The croak of a raven, the cry of a lamb, the shout of a distant shepherd calling to his dog working sheep from the tops, these were the only sounds that broke the insistent harmony of silence, save the distant tinkling of innumerable becks and the shivering clatter of scree beneath their feet. It was a silence which spoke to Corah, as to Wordsworth's Solitary, a "language not unwelcome to sick hearts."

The Langdale Pikes had, to a curious degree, lost their impressiveness as they had drawn closer to them. Now with increasing distance, they began to regain their grandeur. Corah halted and turned, as it were, to say farewell, to those eminent, silent pinnacles, those chiselled rocks chased with silver waterfalls.

"Thoughts are not busier in the minds of man
Than the mute agents stirring there."

The lines occurred inevitably to her memory. Leigh at her side, took from her shoulders the dragging knapsack, but spoke not. She was thrilled with an intense gratitude for his sympathetic silence. And her mind was filled with a strange acceptance of a coming crisis in her life.

And then, at last, after an hour's fierce climbing, she

emerged, hot and panting, from the stifling ghyll. The cool breath of the high fells met and kissed her fevered brow. She drew deep draughts of the bracing, rarefied air through her nostrils. After that long stairway of stones, the soft mossy turf lent a new spring to her gait.

Before her stretched mile upon mile of desolate turf-clad mountain top, over which, she knew, she might wander at will, with the almost certainty of meeting no human creature. The keen air of the hill-tops blew upon her spirit as it had been an Æolian harp, awakening a delicious harmony within her. She felt a strange exaltation of the spirit shrilling forth in unison with an exultation of the senses hitherto unknown. She longed to fling her arms above her head and to shout with joy to the echoing mountains and the skies; to summon to her side the great God Pan. For she was vibrating in answer to the caress of Nature, which is the breath of God. She was made free of the Wild.

And this physical and spiritual ecstasy found expression in a new-found lightness of tread, and an unwonted felicity of balance and stride.

The denizens of the Lakeland dales move clumsily to the eye, because they are shod in heavy clogs—boots made with iron-bound wooden soles and stiff leather uppers, admirable as a weather-proof protection to the feet, but utterly destructive to grace of movement. Shepherds wearing them, and moving with a stiff regular swing, get over the ground indeed, however rough or steep it may be, at an astonishing speed. But the stiff soles destroy the play and spring of the foot and the prehensile action of the toes.

When wrestling, in stockinged feet, dalesmen prove that they are by nature as quick of foot and as active as cats. But the clogs ruin their natural grace. Very different is the gait of the natives of the Scottish or Irish Highlands, who, in youth at any rate, travel barefoot when they can, leaving their boots at home or carrying them over their shoulders to kirk or school. Such an one, even if he has only spent his childhood in his native land, never loses, even on the deadening pavements of the town, a lightness of step and a freedom of movement as unique and beautiful as the fragrance of the heather.

It was with such a lithe and lissom gait that this Western girl now stepped forth over the bog and moorland in the direction of the Eskhause ridge, moving in a country not her own, but in a mood attuned to the native poetry she loved, to the lift of God's mountains, and the waft of His wind. She was light on her toes and agile as a Highland pony. Her graceful figure swung in unison with her springing strides.

To watch her moving over that rough moorland was to witness a poem in action, a symphony made visible; to behold a mood expressed, a spiritual aspiration physically demonstrated; to experience a sensation spiritualized, a dream in being. Leigh, watching her, rang the changes in his mind upon such endeavours as these to express to himself the rare rapture of the vision vouchsafed to him. Like any other man of the world, he had enjoyed, in the theatres and the music halls, the rhythmic movements and finished elegance of the English skirt-dancers. He had been moved by the vigour, passion, vehemence and poise

of the Russian ballet. He had been stirred by the fierce, provocative dancers of Spain. He had experienced the crude excitement of aboriginal corybantics, and had flushed at the alternating languors, and spasmodic, suggestive thrustings of the Nautch girls. But never before, so it seemed to him, had he witnessed the unalloyed beauty of the rhythm of movement, the pure poetry of natural motion.

So watching her, he marvelled that he had waited so long and so coolly to claim this beautiful creature for his bride. He cursed himself for a fool that she was not already his. He would wait no longer. Mollie Atkinson's kisses were scarce cold upon his lips. But she was already, in his mind, a forgotten incident.

They passed, on their left, the black waters of Angle Tarn, lying, cold and sullen, under the rocky scarps and gullies of Hanging Knott, and in the shadow of Bowfell. They threaded their way across the bog formed by the stream which runs out of the tarn down Langstrath under Glaramara into Borrowdale. Captain Derrydoe led them straight on to the cairn on the ridge, whence they obtained their first view of Great Gable and the Pillar Mountain and Great End. Then he insisted on their leaving the trail and bearing away to the left to climb the actual summit of Esk Hause. They were amply rewarded by the vision of green and lovely Eskdale at their feet.

When, hereafter, they had made some progress in their original direction under Allen Crag, Corah had occasion for further gratitude to their guide. For before they reached the sparkling waters of Sprinkling Tarn, dancing silver in the sunshine, he made

them bear away to the right, and paused at the head of Ruddy Ghyll. The scene which broke upon their view was never to be forgotten.

Close at hand a rill was tumbling down a deep cleft of red rock, which glistened with green and olive mosses and red and yellow lichen. To the ledges of the rock clung tiny ferns, and in the crevices yellow tufts of crow's-foot and pink crane's-bill hid their roots; and single harebells hung, so daintily poised in air, that they seemed merely to have alighted there in passing, like delicate blue butterflies.

Further away their eyes followed down Grain Ghyll to Seathwaite, and enchanted Borrowdale.

Beyond, lay the silver space of Derwentwater, its thickly-wooded shores guarded at the head by the beautiful little pyramid of Castle Crag, and bounded on the horizon by the long, soft, heather-clad slopes of Skiddaw. The supreme loveliness of that vista, and the depth, brilliance and variety of colour, breaking upon her with a shock of surprise, affected Corah almost to tears. Gone was the wild mood of physical exaltation, though her cheeks were still flushed, and still her eyes sparkled with delight. But her soul was filled with a deep and quiet happiness, and overflowed in silent gratitude to the Maker of things so beautiful. It is, indeed, amongst the great and enduring features of Nature, amidst mountains and quiet dells, the green glades of vast forests, or by the silent shores of lakes, that the small things of life fall away most easily from the sensitive soul, and the presence of the Eternal is most securely felt.

Thoughts that lie deep, but unuttered, in the hearts of all, spring up in their native beauty within us upon

the hilltops, unchecked by the ceaseless din of the world-voices we have left below. The valleys, then, seem so silent and untarnished. And overhead, the glory is so nigh.

"I see what you meant," Corah said gently to Leigh, as they turned to go. "My altars, too, are the mountains, if they always give such peace."

CHAPTER XII

A QUARTETTE AT WASTDALE

SKIRTING the rocky base of Great End, the north-eastern buttress of the Sca Fell range, they crossed the beck which flows from Sprinkling Tarn, through bog and moss, to Styhead Tarn. They caught a glimpse of Napes Needle, hanging in air, it seemed, beneath Great Gable. Soon they reached the top of Styhead Pass.

To their right now lay the descent to Seatoller, and the sources of the Derwent. But they turned their faces towards the west, and the sea. Leaving the springy moorland track, they entered upon a narrow, precipitous, and exceedingly rough pathway, gouged out of the southern slopes of Great Gable. The surface of this right mountain road—down which the dalesmen, returning, "Saturday fresh," from Keswick market, have been known to gallop their horses—was strewn with fallen stones and fragments of rock. Occasionally it led through a narrow doorway of immense boulders, or round a corner, bounded on one side by the mountain, and on the other by a precipitous slope. At such points, the wind, blowing up the pass from the sea, and bursting, as it were, through the funnel of a bellows, would meet and buffet them

with such sudden and savage blasts, that Corah had occasion to be grateful to Captain Derrydoe's warning shouts, and not less to Leigh's strong arm of support. Nor could she disguise her need of the latter's help, when the track, zigzagging sharply downwards, revealed the steep slope below, which seemed to her unaccustomed gaze even steeper than it was. Seeing that she was growing giddy, Leigh distracted her attention by bidding her look up at the mountains above. There was Kirk Fell ahead, on the right. Above them towered Great Gable, green and grey. And beneath that mighty mass of tumbled stones, the sheer crags of the Napes ridges proudly reared their heads. Screes stretched down to the base of them—soft, white, sinuous lines of small stones, streaming through the narrow gates of those great rocks, and, once past them, shooting down, straight as an arrow, to the distant stream below.

The afternoon was far advanced. The slanting rays of the westering sun lit up each rock and stone of the Napes, and revealed, as it were, the very anatomy of the mountain. Opposite, Great End, curtained by Lingmell and Sca Fell, sank into shadow.

The awful abysses of Piers Ghyll, the deep ravine which divides them, changed from lurid purple to impenetrable blackness. Each moment added to their threatening grandeur. And then, but a mile or two below, surrounded by the cold, dark heights of the Sca Fell range, by the sunlit crags of Great Gable, Kirk Fell, the Pillar, and the Steeple, and the glistening, grassy ridge of Yewbarrow, they beheld the deep, fertile plain of Wastdale, its green meadows smiling peacefully in the evening sunshine. There, Lingmell

beck threaded its way, a streak of silver, through an irregular patchwork of walled fields, past little white homesteads, down to the narrow, stern, desolate lake of Wastwater, and the sea. This sudden change from steep mountain sides to flat meadowland, from the desolate grandeur of rock and chasm, to rich cultivated meads and timbered slopes is a characteristic of the Lakeland dales. It is a feature unique, and ever fraught with a fresh surprise, even to those who know them best.

To Corah Nailes, gifted beyond most with the capacity of appreciating the beauties of Nature, this contrasting loveliness of dale and pike, of meadow and crag and scree, came as a veritable revelation. After so long a day, passed amidst such changing scenes of colour and form and view, she was half dazed by the loveliness of this new experience. Tired as she was, she scarcely heeded the long walk over the rough stones between grey walls, which did duty for a road when once they arrived at the bottom. She would not, indeed, have noticed it at all, but for the relief of the grass track which supervened for half a mile before they reached the Inn, famous to generations of cragsmen, the haunt of Christopher North, the home of "auld Will Ritson," Wastdale Head.

Tea, and a "thick tea," tea with bread and butter and jam and eggs and cakes and pasties and scones! That was the immediate necessity. But even whilst they ate, Captain Derrydoe was looking first out of the window, and then at his watch.

"We must go down to the lake head to see the sunset," he said. "You're pretty tired now, I expect, Miss Nailes. But it is a peculiarity of our

mountain country that, however tired you are after a day's walk like this, when you have had half an hour's rest, you feel as fresh as a bird. The air is so good. And I assure you this will be worth while. Look at the sky ! ”

Nailes, who had borne his day extraordinarily well, declared, however, that he didn't give a cuss for doggone sunsets. He was going to stay and smoke a cigar in his bath before dinner.

But Corah and Leigh agreed with the gallant Captain, who, truth to tell, had been rising hourly in their estimation. They found, too, that his prophecy was correct. When they rose, they were a little stiff, indeed, but fatigue had vanished.

They made their way along a grassy cart-track by Mosedale Beck to the lake head. Beneath the shadow of a three-mile ridge of storm-riven crags, the fathomless mere lay black and lowering. Down this ridge the straight lines of the Wastdale Screes, framed by tremendous gullies, ran from the summit to the very edge of the water. Through the black recesses of the ghylls, tiny threads of silver marked the falling waters within them. Right at the head of the lake they saw, at last, Sca Fell Pike, towering over the murky waters and separated from its craggy brother, Sca Fell, by the jagged gap of Mickledore.

A current of warm air, striking against the cold summit of the Pike, was condensing into a mist, which streamed away and disappeared into the clear blue sky, like smoke from the funnels of a steamer. The sun sank lower behind the high fells. Suddenly the grey fringes of those filmy, evanescent clouds were touched by the torch of the hidden sun and flamed into fire.

Streamers of delicate gauze-like vapour, evanescent in tone as in texture, floated away into the shadow, or wound stealthily past cold, dark pinnacles of hanging rock. They grew grey again, and nebulous, in their passage. They caught once more the glow of the fires of Helios and, flushing into a mass of glowing radiance, imparted it to the crags in the dark hollows beneath. Dull, leaden rocks flared up, changing in a moment from deep purple to a delicate amethystine glow, from amethyst to the lurid crimson of molten metal. Vulcan, you might have thought, had thrust these cold, immutable slabs of primæval rock into his furnace, and, in some divine ecstasy of passion or of pain, had blown them into elemental life in the forge of the armourer of the Gods.

Corah, Leigh, and Derrydoe watched in silence until the colour faded from the clouds, and they saw the moon come up in a daffodil-tinted sky, over the deep black wall of mountains. Then, in silence, they turned homewards. Among the branches of the yew trees, which encircle the tiny church, the stars hung like silver fruit.

Nailes met them at the hotel-door. He was smoking the inevitable cigar, and examining the climbing boots and ice-axes which littered the entrance. A few cragsmen, clad in rough homespun and smoking pipes, lounged in the porch.

"I'm here to say," said Nailes, "that I'm goin' to climb Sca Fell Pike to-morrow."

"That beats the band, Dad!" Corah exclaimed.

"I will, sure," said Nailes. He explained later that he had been talking to these climbing lunatics, and they said it was a mere walk. And if he had

done to-day, he could do to-morrow. And he guessed he would.

"Sure Dad's crazy!" said Corah. But she kissed him good-night, with obvious admiration and pleasure. Even her father, it seemed, was not untouched by the magic of the mountains and the wild.

So, next day, they essayed the ascent of Sca Fell Pike. The day was very hot, and through the rarefied air on a mountain side the sun strikes hotter than elsewhere.

"It thinks it better worth shining on!" cried Corah, gallantly.

But the long and arduous climb up the exceedingly steep grass slopes of Lingmell tried them all. Derrydoe, however, perspiring profusely, assured them that this was the worst bit, and that once they had surmounted the shoulder of Lingmell, the rest was a mere stroll up Brown Tongue, and then a clamber over rough rocks to the top.

Nailes reiterated that Sca Fell Pike was the loftiest mountain in England, and he had set out to climb it. He would probably die, but he would go on till he died. Leigh, plodding along, none too happily, marvelled at the tenacity of the hard-bitten little man, as he slipped and stumbled along, in his tight trousers, and pointed, patent-leather boots, but without a thought of giving up. His kit was in itself an outrage and a sacrilege to such a scene. Still more so was the stream of amazing American expletives with which he punctuated his progress.

"Oh, Golly! Gosh! Darn!" he cried, as he slipped up for the twentieth time. "What the nation am I doing here? I'm a boob at this show! I

shouldn't be permitted to wander around here without a nurse. I've no use for this fool pastime. Snakes! If this is ace-high mountain climbing, I'm woozy and the next time—— Oh, Doggone the rocks! Dodgast the measly mountains! Oh, *Cuss* the rancid hill! This ain't exactly an embroidery bee!"

Yet he persevered. And so, too, did Derrydoe, soft, and short of wind, and waxing every moment in heat, until Corah wondered if ever on earth before a man had felt as hot as he looked.

Amused at first by the financier's exclamations, Leigh walked for a while at his side. But when they reached the foot of the grassy slope of Brown Tongue, he fell back to his usual place at Corah's side. Mist was gathering about the crags of Sca Fell in front of them. But though the tops were hidden from view, the rocky bases of the great precipices were visible in brilliant sunshine.

"'In fleecy cloud voluminous enwrapped,'" Leigh murmured to Corah.

With a swift upward glance she acknowledged the quotation. But she did not answer in words.

Conversation is an art, or a pastime, of the Lowlands. On the mountains most men speak but seldom, and with difficulty, overawed as though in the presence of a king. So Corah and Leigh stood for a moment, in such silence as befitted the scene, gazing at the distant sunlit sea, and at the purple gloom of the Mosedale amphitheatre of mountains.

When they reached the top of Brown Tongue and turned to their right to ascend the Pike, the character of the scene changed. Instead of smooth grass there was a chaos of boulders, cubes and squares of rock

scattered and heaped like lumps of sugar in a basin, the very realization of a child's idea of a mountain-top. It was a scene of indescribable grandeur and desolation. No solitary object of human workmanship was visible, save, here and there, a cairn of heaped stones to mark the shepherd's way; no vestige of animal life, save the scattered leavings of fox or raven. There were only rocks and boulders and stones, and a few tussocks of stunted heath and withered grass; heath and rock tossed about in endless, monotonous confusion.

Hot and exhausted, Nailes stumbled on, and "cussed the rancid mountain" more heartily than ever. He was almost stupid with fatigue, and his patent-leather boots had been scratched and cut to ribbons as he slipped and skipped from boulder to boulder. Derrydoe, speechless and panting, literally crawled behind him.

At length they reached the topmost cairn of the Pikes. It is one of the grandest spots in England, and more splendid, now, than the summit of Snowdon.

All around, hung jagged rocks and yawning chasms, the fragments of former pinnacles battered down by wind and frost and rain. And those huge boulders, chaotically heaped about them, were but a replica in miniature of the veritable tumult of mountains, of which Sca Fell Pike is the centre. Stretching in a vast circle, from the Steeple, the Pillar and Kirk Fell, Grisedale Pike and Great Gable, to the red façades of Grasmoor and Red Pike, by Buttermere; from Skiddaw and Saddleback and the long Pennine range, to Fairfield, Helvellyn, High Street and Ill Bell; from Ingleborough and the Yorkshire hills

to Bowfell; from the Coniston group to Black Comb over the Duddon sands, the peaks of the high fells surrounded them, their green slopes pied with purple by the cloud shadows, their bases set in fertile valleys, in gleaming lakes, or in the silver seas of Ireland and the Solway Firth.

But, for the moment, neither Nailes nor Derrydoe cared for any of these things. They sat and panted, drinking in the cool air, and opening their jackets to the fresh breeze of the mountain-tops. And then it was that they thought of lunch; then it was that Nailes realized that there was no water to be obtained on a mountain-top. Their thirst was prodigious.

"I should like, now," said Derrydoe, "two bottles of beer."

"I would give five hundred dollars for one," groaned Nailes.

"No," returned Derrydoe, firmly. "One would be worse than nothing. *Two* bottles of beer."

The idea was at once a torment and a relief. The very thought of such a drink tantalized whilst it cooled. When Leigh and Corah came up, they found them still discussing spasmodically whether one bottle of ale would be better or worse than none. None, at any rate, was forthcoming. After they had eaten their sandwiches, they descended by the zig-zag chasm of Piers Ghyll, where they all drank greedily, and truth to tell, without any evil result, of the cold water, against which so much had been preached the day before.

Throughout this day and yesterday, Corah had regarded her father with increasing astonishment,

and even with a growing tenderness. For the first time in her life, she fancied that she had touched some ground of sympathy between them. He had taken this walk of his own accord; he had not been disagreeable about it. In his queer way, he had actually appeared to enjoy it. He, who had usually less than nothing of the ordinary tourist about him, seemed to be childishly delighted on reaching the hotel, because he had "ticked off," as he expressed it, "the dandiest thing the Britishers could show in mountains." That was not quite Corah's way of looking at things. But, contrasted with his usual saturnine absorption in making dollars, it was so striking and unexpected a touch of human nature, that she readily interpreted it as a sign of coming grace.

There is nothing in the world so brave, as the courage of a good and loving woman; nothing so Christ-like, as her infinite capacity of forgiveness. There was something very beautiful, aye, and very pathetic, in the way that this only and very lovely daughter of the millionaire was ready to open her heart at the first sign of any approach to human feeling on his part, to him who had so wronged her beloved mother.

Far, indeed, was she from divining the true cause of his high spirits. She was incapable herself of thinking evil, or of providing against it. She would have dismissed it as the suggestion of the foul fiend himself, had she been told that Nailes' cheerfulness was due, not to the experience of natural beauty which yesterday and to-day had brought forth, but to the coming accomplishment of a combination on the morrow, for which he had long been scheming.

Of his unwonted good humour, there were ample proofs that night. He ordered a pint of port—a thing he usually loathed—for the delectation chiefly of Derrydoe. He pledged Leigh in a glass to celebrate the achievement of their climb. After dinner, they and the rock-climbers who were staying in the hotel, all foregathered in the tiny smoking-room. Corah and Leigh were soon deep in maps and climbing-books, eagerly planning another walk in the mountains for the morrow. Nailes led the conversation with the cragsmen. He inquired into their methods, the difficulties and dangers. He questioned them, like some youthful tyro, eager to learn. And they, ever ready, like true sportsmen, to initiate a brother, answered him earnestly, and at length. They spoke of ropes and ice-axes, of gullies and hand-holds, and chimneys, scarpetti, and chock-stones; above all, of traverses.

Ere long they led the way to the billiard-room, in order that one of their number might demonstrate to his incredulous eyes, the famous feat of the “billiard-room traverse.”

If the church at Wastdale is the smallest in England, the billiard-room at the inn is certainly the tiniest, and the space left round the table assuredly the scantiest. It is used mainly for games of hand-fives and gymnastic feats. One climber set the ball a-rolling by sitting on the table and thence making “the passage of the billiard-table leg,” passing round it underneath the table, without touching the floor. The feat was hailed with well-deserved applause. Then the billiard-room traverse was essayed.

A short, thick-set man placed his hands upon the

edge of the table and walked backwards up the wall to within a yard of the ceiling. Then he moved sideways along wall and table with short steps of hand and feet, until he reached the first corner and the second. These were negotiated with effort, by immense strides. In the middle of the third wall the gymnast took advantage of the window to rest his legs on the ledge. He needed an "easy" before attempting the difficult task ahead. For in the fourth wall is a large recess, which cannot be reached from the billiard table. There was less than twelve inches between it and the ceiling. It was only by reaching this piece of wall, and by passing above the recess, that the journey could be continued. Then comes the door. This is the crux of the campaign. The climber brought one foot gingerly down, until the toe rested upon the latch-hold. Next, supporting himself upon the corner of the table with one hand, he grasped the top of the door-lintel with the other, and, letting go with the first, swung himself round in the doorway, and caught hold of the lintel on the opposite side also. Here he paused for a few moments, jamming himself tightly in the opening by pressure of back and legs, in order to rest his arms. To complete the traverse in the orthodox fashion, it only remained to work along the passage as far as the smoking-room, and to descend at last to the floor.

Corah and Leigh had remained there, poring over maps, and making out a route for next day. They were astonished at the apparition of a shirtless, perspiring gymnast descending from the ceiling. He backed out in confusion, stammering apologies. But Nailes clapped him on the back, declaring that he was some climber, and made him feel like two cents.

Neither Corah nor Leigh beheld the hideous gleam of triumphant hatred and mockery which had passed over his face, as he caught sight of their two heads close together over the maps. He returned with Derrydoe to watch other antics of the cragsmen, who passed the rest of the evening in wriggling through chair-backs, hanging on ropes, and balancing on doors and tables. Nailes had all the air of thoroughly enjoying himself. "These hyar stunts," he averred, "beat the band."

But next morning brought a change. When they met at breakfast, and Corah was ordering some sandwiches for lunch, her father declared himself too stiff to walk that day. His feet, he said, were sore, and he wasn't going to set them on any rancid rock again that day. Those darned hills, he declared, made him tired. He despised them all.

Corah could hardly disguise her disappointment. But she was anxious to humour her father, and eager to demonstrate her gratitude for his having entered so far, and for the first time, into all that seemed to her to make life worth living. She proposed, therefore, that they should saunter about the dale that morning, and have an early lunch. Then, perhaps, he would be ready to join them in the walk up Mosedale to the Pillar Rock, which they had planned overnight.

Nailes appeared none too well pleased at this. Corah could prom'nade where she darned well pleased, he snapped. But Phineas T. would lie low. Nor did he soften after lunch. He declared that he needed rest; that business claimed him; that he couldn't afford to go fooling around over these one-horse

pimples every day of the year. He must be quiet, and allowed to think. Besides, his feet were sore.

"I'm hyar to say," he concluded irritably, "that a man in my business, if he don't keep up a lively thinking morning, noon, and night, the first thing he knows, he bogs down in ruin full and complete. If a man like me don't keep up a continual stream of thinking, he sure burns his breeches behind him."

"Bridges," murmured Corah.

"Wa-al, bridges, then. It don't make much difference. What'cher say, Leigh?"

"Depends if you are walking or sitting down," Leigh answered with a laugh.

"Waal, I'm sittin' down to-day. But what's stoppin' you and Corah from walking up any old pimple you fancy? Derrydoe and I will stay hyar like Christians, and do a think about finance. But there ain't no sense in your rotatin' around hyar."

So it came about that Corah and Leigh set out alone. It was their intention to walk in exactly the opposite direction to the way they had pursued the day before. Striking up the green slopes of Mosedale, behind the inn, they followed the beck which tumbles down the glen from the top of Black Sail Pass, between Kirk Fell, Red Pike, and Yewbarrow. Presently, Black Sail emerged from behind the shoulder of Kirk Fell. The Pillar Mountain towered in front of them. Turning for a moment to look back, they beheld the magnificent cliffs of Sca Fell glistening in the distance. Another half-hour's walk brought them to the summit of Black Sail. The back of Great Gable was now in view on their right, and Green Gable and Brandreth, and Grey Knotts. In front of these lay Dale Head

and the heights between Honister and Newlands. Over Ennerdale rose the barren granite crags of High Crag, High Stile, and Red Pike, and, behind, the red bluff of Grassmoor. Corah and Leigh discussed the temptation of walking down into Ennerdale, and out, over Scarf Gap, into Buttermere. But it was clearly beyond their compass. And besides, they were eager to view at close quarters the famous Pillar Rock, a sheer wall and pinnacle of crags, which projects from the side of the Pillar Mountain, and towers over Ennerdale. Turning to the left, therefore, by Looking Stead, they wound their way along the rugged face of the Pillar Mountain, over a very rough, narrow, and ill-defined track amid rocks and boulders.

The narrowness of the unkempt path, the imminence of the overhanging crags above, and the steep fall of the rocky slopes beneath them, more than once tried Corah's nerve. But Leigh was always ready, with a strong arm and a cheery word, to help her in these moments. She accepted the help of her cavalier with a growing acquiescence in his right to aid. At last they reached a small plateau, projecting over the valley beneath. It was about a hundred yards from the base of the Pillar Rock, and separated from it by a basin of scree, which had fallen from the tops. Here they decided to halt and eat their sandwiches. It was, indeed, a spot of surpassing beauty and grandeur.

The mighty Pillar Rock has been carved out from the mass of the mountain-top by the action of the weather. Riven pinnacles of volcanic ash, clustered like the pipes of an organ, cling to the side of this sheer buttress of rock. Scarred with deep clefts and

gullies, and perpendicular chasms, it looms erect over a chaos of loose stones and broken boulders, which hang poised over desolate Ennerdale.

Far below, at the foot of this slanting wilderness of stones, the bright stream of Liza could be seen, dropping merrily downwards from her birthplace in the sombre solitudes of the Gable. So still was the day, so silent the barren valley, that the murmur of the river, two thousand feet below, rose plainly to the ear, as it gurgled on its way down to Ennerdale Water. Across the river, over the Pass of Scarf Gap, the grand sweeping outline of Skiddaw and Saddleback stretched along the horizon.

Reclining on the grassy plateau beneath the Pillar, and gazing at the marvellous scene below them, Corah Nailes and Leigh lost all sense of time. Each fleeting moment only brought a new delight of colour, a new surprise of tint. Slowly, over Ennerdale, opening wide to the westward, the sun began to sink into the distant sea, a ball of fire in a green and primrose sky. The jagged crags of cruel rock above gleamed amethyst. And eventide crept slowly up from the lonely valley beneath.

Leigh leapt up with a start, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "We shall have our task cut out, if we are to get back in time for dinner."

"Oh, must we really go?"

"Yes, little lady, I'm afraid we must, and quickly. It doesn't do to get caught by nightfall on these fells."

Even as he spoke, wisps of fleecy cloud began to float from the cooling rocks above, and, dropping

down towards them, disappeared into space, chilling the air as they passed. Corah shivered, and looked up, and rose. She saw films of delicate blue vapour sweeping over the surrounding fells, now concealing, now revealing, their sombre glistening bases. She saw the vague forms of giant crags looming fitfully on the heights. A nameless dread seized her.

"Yes," she said, "we must be going. Quick!"

She walked, as rapidly as she dared, back along the narrow, rough high-level track. It seemed an age before they reached the ridge of the pass. When they did so, Corah gave a cry of dismay.

An opaque white wall of mist lay over Mosedale, blotting out the whole valley beneath. And fresh clouds were streaming from the rocks at their side.

"It probably looks worse than it is," said Leigh, to encourage her. "When we reach that bank of fog, I expect we shall find that we can see our way as well as we can here, and when we look back we shall wonder how we managed to come through this stuff. Anyway, we must get down as quick as we can."

Cheered by his confident tone, as much as by his words, Corah followed her companion's lead over the track by the side of the beck. It wandered indistinctly over grass, rock, moss, and bog. The way had seemed clear enough, as they ascended in the strong light, with their object in full view. But now it was hard to trace. First they were led astray by a sheep track; then they lost the way in crossing the beck. They turned back to find it. They could not trace it. They turned again, to descend haphazard into the bank of fog, and then began to realize that they

did not any longer clearly know in what direction they were facing, or where, exactly, their destination lay.

The fog advancing upwards from the dale was entangling them as in a net. With terrifying rapidity they found that not only was their sense of direction, as it were, withdrawn from them, but their power of progressing in any direction was being curtailed. Each footstep, as the damp murk surged increasingly about them, became a matter of growing doubt, of waxing difficulty. Each undulation in the grass, each small rock, became a problem in their progress.

The damp vapour struck chill. Leigh, who was leading the way, stopped, and came back to Corah, and took her arm. She was ready to cry with the cold and the strangeness of it all. Her teeth chattered.

"Don't be afraid," he said, "it will clear off soon, I expect. And anyway, we can't go far wrong."

"I'm not afraid," she said shakily. "I'm not afraid—with you." But she was near to breaking-point. The terror of the mountains and their mystery, the awe of the callous, lone spaces, was upon her. It was only with a great effort that she prevented herself from shrieking. And then her sense of humour came to her aid. "Guess dad will reckon he was right about his rancid mountains," she laughed. "And to think we are only a mile or two from the hotel."

"I wish I was quite sure of that," said Leigh, unguardedly, for her light tone had disarmed him.

"What do you mean?" she asked nervously.

He bit his tongue, cursing his folly. "Well, I don't really quite know where we are," he confessed.

"We have been walking a long time since we left Black Sail Pass. We ought to have been down in the dale long ago, by now, as I reckon. I'm rather afraid we must have got away to the right or the left, towards Great Gable or Yewbarrow. Lord knows!"

They blundered on in silence for some time. At length they were brought up short by a huge boulder looming in front of them.

"Stop here," said Leigh.

He went forward and felt all round the boulder. He could see nothing beyond it. He could remember nothing like it. He came back to Corah.

"I'm awfully sorry," he said. "I'm afraid I'm hopelessly at sea. This might be anything, anywhere. The question is, *where* is it? And what's beyond it? If we are on Yewbarrow, it can't be anything very dreadful. But if we are on Kirk Fell, I don't know—— And if we are on Great Gable, we might go plunging over the Napes crags any moment, if we go on. On the other hand, if we *are* still in Mosedale, and plug on, we shall probably get down to the inn, some day."

Corah bravely summoned her reason to her aid, to repress another sudden inclination to cry.

"I've read somewhere," she said, "that when you're lo—lost, you always bear to the left, because your right foot is the stronger."

"Yes," said Leigh, seriously. "That is why I'm afraid it's the Gable."

"What are we to do?"

"When in doubt, lie down," he said, with an effort at cheerfulness. "This fog will drift away

soon, and we shall see where we are. I'm afraid there is nothing for it till then."

They sat down under the boulder.

Corah shivered. After the hot day the damp mist was piercingly cold.

Very gently, Leigh took off his coat, and put it round her shoulders. The chivalrous act was done so unobtrusively, with an air of its being as much a matter of course as opening the door for a lady, that Corah felt it would have been churlish to a degree to object.

"How good of you!" she murmured. "But you? You will be chilled to death."

"Oh no. If I feel cold I'll stamp about."

They sat for some time in silence.

At length Leigh spoke. "If you fumble about in the pockets of that coat, I believe you'll find some chocolate," he said. "And I am quite sure you will find a pipe, tobacco-pouch, and some matches."

Corah handed him the pipe and tobacco. They divided the chocolate.

"It is a view held by some hardy ones," said Leigh, as he lit his pipe, "that the intimate mystery of the mountains can never be penetrated save by those who spend a night upon the tops. They are probably right. But the question in my mind at the moment is, whether the game is worth the candle."

"There is no question in mine," said Corah, quietly.

"Why, you're not *liking* this?" asked Leigh, in astonishment.

"Yes—no, I mean; physically, I'm hating it, of

course. But mentally I'm—how shall I put it? It's helping me to understand things."

"Yes?"

"Well, just before you spoke, I was thinking how different it all was when we passed this way—probably only a few hundred yards off—this very afternoon. The sunshine, the colour, the warmth, the forms of the fells. And now the dank, dismal cold, and the abysmal darkness. And then I realized that it was the *same* mountain—and always is. The difference lies in us."

"Yes."

"But then, don't you see? You must forgive me; you are an educated man, and there is to you nothing wonderful about my discovery. But just being out here this hour or two, in the darkness and cold, has taught me to understand what I never should have understood without it."

"Do please tell me."

"I mean simply that I have realized exactly what Coleridge meant."

"I sit at the feet of Gamaliel?"

"Oh, you remember the lines, I know, well enough—

" 'Oh Lady, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live;
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud.
And would we ought behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless, ever-anxious crowd,
Ah, from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth.' "

"I wish it would," laughed Leigh, and then added

seriously, "Yes! That is the splendid expression of a great truth. All that we find in nature, I suppose he means, must be created by ourselves. Even when she appears so gorgeous in her loveliness as to seem to be apparelled in her wedding-garment, she owes that beauty to the light within us."

"Exactly," Corah returned, thrilled with the sympathy of his understanding. "And in the same way, when she seems as now, cold and silent as the grave, pallid in her shroud, it is the light within us, as you say, or the lack of it, which makes her so."

" 'It were a vain endeavour
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within.' "

That's how it goes, isn't it? Well, it is horribly uncomfortable here, but it is well worth it. Somehow I feel as if I had taken a long step forward towards understanding the magic of the mountains, and solving the spell of the hills."

"And I," said Leigh humbly, "towards understanding how much I have to learn from your lips."

"Oh no! From the poets, perhaps."

"I can only reach poetry through you."

They lapsed into silence. Corah lay beneath the boulder, on the cold hillside, listening to the babble of the stream below, and to the cocks crowing intermittently in the distant farmyards. Darker than the dark sky, a black wall of mountains rimmed them round, in an immense void of impenetrable blackness. But, overhead, stars began to come out, one by one,

and to disappear again behind opaque banks of drifting clouds.

Corah watched them for a long time, wondering. Her heart was throbbing excitedly. For Leigh had spoken these last words with intention.

He put out his hand and took her numbed fingers between his own.

"Poor little girl!" he said very tenderly. "You are half frozen."

"No, indeed, I'm all right, with *your* coat. But, tell me, what did you mean by what you just said?"

"That I can only reach poetry through you? Just that. It is absolutely true."

"But you are so clever. Your mind is trained and educated. I know nothing—but what I feel."

"Do any of us? That is just it. I am educated? Yes, to forget. My mind is trained? Yes, to grasp practical problems and to tackle intellectual difficulties, but to ignore sentiment and poetry. It was all there once. Ever since I came up here, and a thousand-fold since I saw you, I have been haunted by the memory of my lost self."

"You mean?"

"When I came before, it was on a reading party from Oxford. I was young, eager, full of the poetry and enthusiasm of youth. Since then, I have been trained, indeed, trained in a bitter school—the school of the Courts and the world. A man loses touch with poetry, Miss Nailes, when he is fighting all the time for his daily bread."

"I do not think he need—or ought," said Corah, quietly.

"Most of us do, anyway. I did."

"It ought to be such a help to commune with great minds and high ideals beautifully expressed."

"But one drifts away from it. The pressing details of practical affairs obscure one's thoughts. It is only when one comes back to a country like this—itself the loveliest poem which that poet, Nature, ever wrote—that one gets back into the mood again, the mood of poetry and enthusiasm. Or is it that I begin to see the loveliness of poetry and of the place, because the 'inner light' has been lit again by your companionship and teaching, and has begun to burn again a little less dimly, each hour I spend with you, Corah?"

She gasped a little "Oh!" of protest as he pronounced her Christian name. But she could not gainsay him. He was speaking with an intense eagerness and depth of feeling which was quite new, to her, in him.

"We have had a wonderful three days," he pursued, still adapting his pleading, like the skilful advocate he was, almost instinctively to the key which most appealed to his eager listener. "It has been an experience which I, at least, shall never forget. Come what may, I shall always treasure the remembrance of these days, spent with you upon the high fells, to the music of the spheres. I have told you how it had brought back to me something of what I had lost—youth's glad oneness with Nature, deepened and rarefied, perhaps, by manhood's self-conscious delight in it. There has been only one fly in the ointment. The pervading dread at the back of my mind has haunted me through these days of

pure and perfect happiness—and hope. Can you imagine what that is?”

“No. How can I?” she murmured. But, unconsciously almost, her tense fingers clasped his in token of sympathy.

“Well—I’ve been trying to say—I owe all this to you. The dread is that, presently, I shall lose your sympathy and companionship. The hope is, a very dim and humble hope, that—that you will give them to me, for always—until Death us do part.”

Never, probably at any other time or place; never, certainly, if he had pleaded his suit in any other fashion of more commonplace courtship, or more passionate love-making, would Bertram Leigh have won the prize of Corah Nailes.

But here and now, upon this cold dark mountain-side, the realities of marriage in a work-a-day world were banished, as it were, to another existence. Nothing was here of passion or sense. Only to the ideal of the ministering angel, which lurks in every woman, and operated in Corah Nailes on the intellectual side, the appeal came straight, and overwhelming.

She had fought down, as we have seen, the deeper, truer, and wider appeal, which Lancaster Syms had made to her feelings. His own deliberate avowal that he would never marry, had compelled her to shut out of her heart and mind the dear image of an ideal mate, which had begun to find a place there. And now at her feet lay a man who had shared with her these three days of mental and physical exaltation, and had evinced a perfect sympathy of appreciation for Nature’s wonders; a man, who had displayed, throughout, the most exquisite courtesy, who had proved himself a

companion at once amusing, considerate, and understanding; a man, above all, who now confessed that he depended upon her for the revival within him of all that was best and highest in his inmost being. It was her duty and destiny, it seemed, to be the High Priestess of this man's soul. She would wean him from his cynicism, save him from the cark and care of worldly trouble and obsessions. She, who had spent her life in an atmosphere of uncongenial materialism, could imagine no higher call than to lead this lover of hers through the union of their minds in the contemplation of noble aspirations, over the stepping-stones of his dead self, to higher things.

It was not love, then—and she knew it was not—but a manifestation of one of the noblest aspects of love, the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-dedication to a high ideal, which prompted Corah to answer—

“If you are sure that you need me——”

Leigh took her chilled form to his breast, and kissed her cheek. And as she kissed him in return, lo! a fairy glimmer shone out over Sca Fell. It was the announcement of the rising moon. Within half an hour Wastdale was flooded with a silver light. The bank of fog shrank down from the fells. The curtain of the mist was drawn.

Leaping to their feet, Corah and Leigh peered eagerly around them. Far away below them, to their right, they caught the red gleam of lamplight shining from a cottage window. That, at any rate, was the goal to aim at. So long as they could see but a yard or two ahead, that was enough. They soon realized that instead of being on the verge of the Napes or stranded on Yewbarrow, they were really only a little

off the track, at the base of Kirk Fell, and not far from the foot of Mosedale. Guided by the kindly moon, they threaded their way over bog and tussock, along babbling becks and over tiny bridges, safely past a thousand pitfalls, down to the welcome inn.

They paused before they reached the door.

"Kiss me good-night, beloved," said Leigh, tenderly seizing her cold hands.

She yielded her lips. "What about Dad?" she asked shyly.

"We can't very well announce our engagement in the hubbub of this place. Shall we keep it a secret till we get home?"

"Yes, I think that would be best."

Their arrival roused a chorus of interest from the anxious inn-keeper and the assembled cragsmen, whose professional contempt vied with their more human sympathy for Beauty in distress.

"Thought you had done the usual thing and wandered down into Ennerdale, by mistake," they explained. "It's no earthly use going out to look for people on these fells on such a night, or we would have organized a search party, you know. Hope you're none the worse?" Quickly reassured, they returned to their gymnastics in the billiard-room.

Nailes greeted them with a strange effusiveness. He had been "scared cold," he assured them. Captain Derrydoe, he explained, had retired to bed with a fit of nerves. A censorious world would have described it as a bottle of whiskey. But Nailes, this night, was not censorious. He was a model of paternal concern and solicitude. He buzzed about Corah like the very busiest of bees. He almost fed her while she supped,

and could hardly bring himself to trust her to the care of the chambermaid, who, at last, carried her off to bed, hot-water bottle in hand. Then he made Leigh recount once more the whole story of their escapade.

Thus he avoided any reference to the manner in which he himself had spent the day. And yet it was a story worth telling, as the stories of such days go.

For no sooner had Corah and Leigh started, than Nailes announced to Derrydoe that he had found out that they could hire a one-horse shay, at this jay hotel, and he guessed he felt like taking a drive. Now there was nothing odd about this. Everybody knows that the whole American nation will always drive or "jump a car," or prefer to be propelled by any available means whatever, rather than walk. The oddity was, really, that Nailes had chosen to walk for two whole days, over Rossett Ghyll and up Sca Fell Pike.

Now, however, the need of being conveyed was strong upon him. He didn't give a cuss whither—so he informed Derrydoe. As there is only one direction in which it is possible to drive from Wastdale Head, this struck everybody concerned as fortunate. Nailes suggested that Derrydoe should accompany him, if he liked, and then they could resume their discussions on finance. If he didn't feel inclined to come, he was careful to explain, he didn't care a cent.

Stung by a shooting pang of recollection of those "bummers" in his house, Captain Derrydoe declared that he felt very much inclined for a drive with the millionaire. Truth to tell, their former discussion on finance, as Nailes was pleased to call it, had left him as completely bewildered and befogged as were the

eager disciples who used to listen to Coleridge talking metaphysics in his latter days.

In one of the most delicious passages in Literature, Carlyle has described the effect of Coleridge's discourses upon the mind of one seeking after Truth. "It was not," he says, "talk flowing anywhither, like a river, but spreading everywhither, in inextricable currents and regurgitations, like a lake or sea; terribly deficient in definite goal or aim, nay, often in logical intelligibility; what you were to believe or do, obstinately refusing to appear from it."

Nailes' discourse to Derrydoe, as they drove past Wastwater towards the sea, was not exactly similar in style, but it was more wilfully confusing and obscure. He talked of rises and contangoes, of bulls and bears, of going short, and of paying propositions. He poured out all the familiar Stock Exchange slang, and swamped his listener with an unceasing flood of statistics. And Derrydoe sat in the jolting trap, his brow moist with the intellectual effort of endeavouring to extricate some clear meaning from the growing tangle of technicalities. But from Nailes' talk, as from Coleridge's, what you were to believe, or do, obstinately refused to appear.

The beauty of the thing, from the point of view of the talker, the agony of it, from the point of view of his hearer, was that, unlike the ordinary audiences of Coleridge, Derrydoe was not there to wonder at the utterances of a genius, or to be impressed by the intellectual gymnastics of a sage; but simply and solely to extract, from another sort of prophet, an omnipotent financial magician, a plain straight tip, as to whether he, Derrydoe, ought to buy or sell

shares in the Narragansett railway, in order to get the bailiffs out of his house.

Nothing was ever so exasperatingly short of happening, as the imparting of such advice. Again and again Nailes would seem to be approaching a definite answer, to be committed to concluding with a plain statement of the case. But each time that he came up to this fence, he would break away, and flying off at a tangent, would start to consider and to argue some imaginary financial contingency of which Derrydoe could not form the faintest idea as to its probability or importance.

So Derrydoe, for once like Carlyle, floundered and fluttered in the mistiest wide unintelligible deluge of things, altogether in a profitless, uncomfortable manner.

When they had driven some distance, they reached the ancient village of Gosforth. Here, the driver informed them, there was a famous Runic cross to be seen in the churchyard.

"The very thing!" cried Nailes. "If this is a way-station, I cal'clate there will be a post-office. One of us ought to see the runy, sure. That's up to you, Derrydoe, whilst I fire in a cable-message. But don't come hanging around whilst I'm busy, or I'll get rattled."

As soon as he found himself alone and undisturbed in the tiny post-office, he dispatched message after message. Derrydoe, in the churchyard, stamped round a slender monolith with a wheel-cross head, and hummed and hawed, as he beheld the strange sculptures, wherein are commemorated in a quaint comingling of Christian and Pagan emblems, the passion

of Christ and the torments of the Demon of Norse mythology. He had ample time to study the subject. For it was almost an hour before Nailes returned, after he had handed in to the astonished telegraphist an immense sheaf of cables and telegrams addressed to scores of brokers in England and America.

He was in high spirits when he rejoined Derrydoe. But Derrydoe was as bored and cross as most men are who have been condemned for an unconscionable length of time to admire monuments, which they neither understand nor appreciate.

To console him, Nailes proposed that they should broach a bottle at the inn. When this had been accomplished, they returned after nightfall to Wastdale Head. They had not, therefore, so very long to wait before Corah and Leigh arrived, wet, tired, hungry, and excited, from their adventure on the fells. It was long enough, however, to prostrate Captain Derrydoe. His balance had already been upset by the mental strain of his financial discussion with Nailes, and the ensuing bottle.

When he heard that Corah and Leigh had not returned, his agitation was creditably immense. He at once began to prepare to set out in search of them. From the inn-keeper downwards, all men of experience assured him that it was utterly useless to start out into Mosedale in a thick fog.

But Derrydoe insisted on preparing. Preparation took the form of whiskey hot, with lemon and a little sugar. This was to ensure keeping the fog out—well out. He reiterated the point even more often than the precaution. By nine o'clock he began to agree with the men of experience. It would be impossible to

find anybody or anything in such a mist. It was hard enough to keep the fog out, even here.

"Why, you can hardly see across the room now, sir!"

There was a shout of laughter at the expense, he supposed, of the gymnast, whom he happened to be addressing.

"I can see you, sir," he exclaimed. "I can see you, though——" he hesitated and was lost—"both of you."

Then, when the burst of laughter had died down, he suggested that perhaps the sound thing to do was to turn in early, so as to be up betimes, to organize the search party. Thus arguing, he placed the whiskey bottle absent-mindedly under his arm, and staggered away to bed.

Nailes had endured the scene with exceeding good-humour. As for his daughter, he utterly refused to confess to anxiety.

"Leigh's a slap-up young fellow. One of your 'Varsity blues, you know, and all that. He'll take care of my girl. He'll see that she don't come to any harm. I lay my bottom dollar on that. She's safe with him—oh yes, she's safe with him."

He laughed his harsh, grating cackle of a laugh, as though he were immensely amused at the mere idea of being anxious, when Corah was in such safe hands.

But when they did return, he received them with an air of tenderness and solicitude truly surprising.

None the worse for the adventure, they walked home next day. Derrydoe, feeling shaky, had suggested in vain that a day's rest might do them good. But nobody was inclined to agree with him.

"Guess you came home in a sea-going hack last night, and were saturated," said Nailes. "Lucky for you there was no missus around, to have you up on the carpet, wantin' to know how about it."

Derrydoe blinked at him, not thoroughly understanding the language. But he gathered the drift of it. And since Nailes had paid the bill, he, brave fellow that he was, pulled himself together to face the return home—the banged door, and the pyjamas.

The lovers, for so they now regarded themselves, adhered to their agreement to say nothing to Nailes at present.

But Nailes knew the signs of love, if not the emotion. The whole way home he whistled and chuckled, chuckled and whistled, as always, most horribly out of tune. His snare had not been laid in vain. The birds were in his net. He smoked an incredible number of cigars, grimacing hideously from time to time, as his eye lit on his daughter or on Leigh. Once or twice Leigh caught his expression, and he contemplated the Gargoyle with a shudder of repulsion and of awe.

Nailes retired early after dinner to his study. Corah soon followed him there, and wished him good night very charmingly, kissing his lank hair, and thanking him for the expedition.

"Good night, my pretty pet," he said.

It was on her lips to speak to him of her engagement. But she lacked courage. She would have known with how much good reason she lacked it, had she heard his outburst after she left the room.

"My pretty pet!" he exclaimed. "Your mother's daughter, every inch of you. Dodgast the lot of you.

When you are safe married to that conceited young blackguard who cost me three hundred thousand dollars, and when he finds that you ain't got a cent between you, I shall be quits with your mother, and you, and him. You despise my dollar-making, do you? I'll teach you whether dollars are worth having or not. I'll enlighten your high-souled intellect as to the value of your rotten poetry and your superior culture. Doggone the blasted lot of you!"

He ground his teeth in vindictive rage, and, picking up a Corsican dagger which he was wont to use as a paper-knife, he dug it into the writing-table, in a paroxysm of savage hatred.

CHAPTER XIII

A FELL FOX-HUNT

“From a drag to a chase, from a chase to a view,
From a view to a kill in the morning.”

D'ye ken John Peel.

DAYS flew by, and weeks, and the weeks grew to months. The hot nights and steamy days of late summer were followed by the fierce sunshine of September days and the brisk airs of September nights. After a spell of wild gales and torrential rains, the gracious summer of St. Luke came in.

A touch of frost at nights laid the begonias low and bleeding in Corah's garden. A touch of frost at nights scorched the dying bracken. More lovely in their death than in their life, they covered the fells with a rich carpet of copper and bronze and gold. A touch of frost at nights raised a blanket of white fog above the surface of the mere. But the moon shone clear overhead, and the stars twinkled in the firmament. And when the sun rose in a still sky, the fog rolled away from the waters, sentient of his magic warmth. Thick banks of mist turned and drifted across the valley, borne upon the wings of the morning. Then, changing in texture from opaque cloud to transparent gossamer, the mist was drawn upwards

by the rising sun. Swirling and eddying in a thousand spirals and pinnacles, it ascended, like steam from a witch's cauldron, and disappeared, as at the touch of a magician's wand, into the blue sky. In the sunlight glistened the grass, bedewed, bediamonded. The ideal conditions for a tearing scent till noon.

So Corah learned from Syms. From him, too, she learned that the hounds and puppies which had been boarded out for the summer in the scattered farms, had by this time been brought back to the kennels. The strenuous delight of winter hunting on the fells was now to be theirs. Not that they had refrained from an occasional hunt on their own during the summer.

Syms had dropped in to lunch at Gallowbarrow Lodge, flushed and excited after a run with the hounds. He had been up all night, attending a case at a distant farm in Monk Coniston—name that recalls the days when the rich Abbots of Furness owned and farmed two-thirds of the land from Morecambe Bay to Solway Firth. Returning after dawn, Syms had seen the sun lift the fog-bank from the lake, and he had fallen in with the Coniston pack. They had found a drag at High Cross, followed it down to Skelwith Bridge, back to Tarn Hows, and thence to Lingmoor Fell; had unkennelled in Tilberthwaite, and killed in Little Langdale by ten o'clock.

Corah could hardly believe that men hunted the fox on foot over these mountains, and killed.

"It is marvellous what you can do in the excitement of the chase," Syms explained. "Sometimes, when you go over the day, and fight your battles o'er again after dinner, you can hardly believe, yourself,

the distance you have travelled 'up and down the fells, or the speed. Of course, when you know the country and the ways of the 'old customer,' you can cut off considerable corners. Luckily he does not often leave his own range of fells, and if he makes a round, you can cut across. And then, if it's hard going for the hounds, it's hard going for the fox, too. But over screes and borrens he is faster than the fleetest hound. Still, it is wonderful, the way one gets over the distance——”

“I should love to see it—and try,” Corah exclaimed. “When is the next meet? Do tell!”

“I'll soon find out,” Syms returned. “You would enjoy it, I'm sure. It takes you out into country you never otherwise would see, and at times and in seasons you would never otherwise venture abroad.”

“I'm crazy to begin.”

“You must be prepared for real hard work. This fell fox-hunting is, as I think, one of the finest sports in the world, and one of the most exciting. But it is one of the hardest. There's no riding, no driving, and very little shirking possible. It's all running, climbing, scrambling, over bogs, walls, rocks, and, very often, straight up a ghyll or a mountain-side.”

“Gee!”

“Sometimes you clamber out of the dales into the clouds, and race along in the mist. Sometimes you climb out of the clouds in the valley into the sunshine on the hilltops. It's early work, too.”

“Why is that?” asked Corah.

“Well, a fell fox lies high. If he has been down in the dale at night, killing a lamb, or robbing a hen-roost, he'll be away back to his lair among the savins

or the great stones of a borran, half-way up Helvellyn, perhaps, or the Old Man, before dawn. Then, you see, hounds have got to wind his line of retreat. They're perfect marvels—these hounds of ours—at cold hunting. But sun kills scent. Before that happens, they must work up to Reynard's kennel on the high fells, across rills and crags, past ghylls and tarns, over moss and snow."

"I see. But surely foxes would never kill lambs?"

"Yes, indeed, they do. That's why they are hunted so keenly in these parts. Our fell-foxes are uncommon big customers—'the biggest fox wot ever was seen,'—as Jorrocks would have said, with reason. So we are all out to kill, here. And that, after all, is the proper reason of a hunt. So you see, it is a democratic sport. That appeals to me, and will appeal to you, no doubt, as a good American."

"I believe you. But why democratic?"

"Why, we're maistly what sheep-farming foak here, and there's a girt lock o' terr'ble big foxes on t' fells, an' if yan doan't kill t' fox, t' fox wull kill t' lambs an' worry t' hogs, likely. So we hunt to kill in self-defence. And the field is composed of shepherds and farmers, and wallers, and a few keen gentry of the right country-side sort. It's too early and too hard a job for your softies."

Corah laughed joyously at Syms' enthusiasm.

"I believe you are trying to frighten me. You think I shall be in the way, if I come. Indeed, I guess that's so."

"Oh no. You know it is not that. But I had to warn you. It is a plug. But you know—I'm sure

you know—how much I should like to show you the sport.”

His flushed cheeks and flashing eyes lost none of their brilliance as his thoughts turned from the radiant joys of the fox-hunter, to the tenderer quest of the lover. Only his voice betrayed by its change of tone to a deeper note, something of the passion and longing which shook his frame.

Neither he, nor anybody else, knew as yet anything of Corah's engagement to Bertram Leigh.

Though some months had elapsed since that romantic betrothal on the slopes of Kirk Fell, it had been kept hitherto a profound secret. Nothing as yet had been said even to Phineas T. Nailes. The delay had been none of Corah's choosing. Secrecy was altogether hateful to her frank nature. But Leigh had explained, somewhat vaguely, that it was necessary. Within a few months, he said, or possibly within a few weeks, he would be in a position to tackle Nailes on even terms. Large sums of money, so he asserted, with an opulent wave of his hand, would shortly accrue. Then he would stand a fair chance of obtaining Nailes' consent. At present he could only go to his prospective father-in-law as a mere Secretary, almost wholly dependent upon him. That would be to court disaster.

Corah could not deny the truth of this proposition. Her father, she knew, would never resist the temptation to bully and snub a poor man, though he preferred the excitement of ruining a rich one.

Nor could she choose but admire her lover's obvious shrinking from exposing himself to the charge of being a mere fortune-hunter. So, against her own

instinct and inclination, she consented to wait for a week or two, and to keep their engagement secret.

As for herself, no sooner had she recovered from the excitement of her adventure, than she began dimly to be aware that she had made a mistake.

Bemused by the romance of the fells, and by the subtle wooing of her lover, she had plighted her troth to a man she loved not. That she did not love him, she had known full well, even whilst she murmured assent. But the mission of helping and guiding and inspiring him, which had seemed so enthralling in the moonlight on Kirk Fell, became less entrancing in the high light of daily intercourse. But if, sub-consciously, she was already aware that the sacrifice she had made was possibly greater than she had realized at the time, she had, none the less, begun to school herself rigorously, as good women will, to love the man to whom she had promised herself. Daily, hourly, she struggled to teach herself the lesson, the wifely lesson, of admiring the man she had chosen, and of closing her eyes to his imperfections. Daily, hourly, the lesson grew harder.

And the task became noticeably more difficult each time that she happened to meet Lancaster Syms. Too late, his manner began to suggest to her, that it was really his deep attachment to herself, for some reason deemed hopeless, which had caused him to declare his certain bachelorhood. Nor could she blame or check the increasing warmth of his attentions. For to do so, would, she knew, involve an explanation with him as to her engagement to Leigh. And Leigh, as we have seen, continued to insist upon secrecy. The fact

was, that, instead of improving, his financial position was becoming daily more embarrassing.

Since that expedition to Wastdale, Nailes had, as he expressed it, shut down on business. To the astonishment and confusion of Leigh, scarcely any correspondence had passed through his hands relating to Narragansett rails. The little that had been intrusted to him was quite incomprehensible. It may be remembered that Leigh had gambled largely on the certainty, as it appeared to him, that Nailes would very soon send up the price of that stock by announcing once more the great bull point of his definitely refunding the twelve million dollars he had illegally issued. Leigh had therefore bought heavily, far beyond his means, for a speculative rise. If the rise occurred, it would yield him a fortune. But since his engagement to Corah, Nailes had left him utterly in the dark. Only a cold, dry light shone upon this sickening fact. Instead of showing a rapid profit, the Stock Exchange quotations of Narragansett rails revealed a marked and steady decline. To the knowing, this indicated either that all was not well with the line, or that heavy selling was taking place; probably both. To Leigh it meant that instead of snatching a fortune, he began to foresee bankruptcy.

That is an awkward position for any man; worrying for most temperaments. But it is peculiarly displeasing for a prospective bridegroom, who is waiting for the psychological moment to approach a cynical and prosperous father-in-law. Leigh, in fact, became so worried that he found it impossible to maintain the pitch of intellect and spirituality by which he had won Corah's troth.

The chaste, serene note of her intellectual conversation was, by a natural but misguided policy on her part, pitched always in the key which had produced that noble harmony between them on the mountains. She could not know that, when the market was falling, such talk was incredibly exasperating to her lover's nerves. He sought solace for his tortured soul by indulgence of the senses.

Mollie Atkinson, fondly trusting, came to his bidding. In the rapture of her arms, he could escape for a while from his frenzy. Whilst Corah talked of Coleridge, or De Quincey, or rhapsodized about the sunset, his carnal mind was haunted by the knowledge that Narragansetts had dropped two points that morning. But when Mollie's warm, red lips clung to his, he forgot all worldly things in a worldly ecstasy.

A few days after his visit, Syms informed Corah that there was to be a meet at White Moss, by Rydal. He proposed to call for her in his dog-cart at eight o'clock, and if the weather was propitious and she felt inclined, they would drive over to the meet at nine o'clock.

The morning was mild, the sky overcast. But there was light on the horizon. Syms said he thought it would be worth while to make a start, anyhow. They could always drive back, if the weather grew worse. They drove towards Ambleside in the growing light of the autumnal morning. It had rained heavily the day before. The woods through which the road wound were rejoicing at the gifts of the vanished storm. A myriad rain-drops glistened upon the luxuriant green and yellow cushions of drenched mosses beneath the trees. The light from patches

of blue sky flickered through dripping, shimmering leaves. Amongst the sodden tree-trunks hundreds of tiny rivulets, born of yesterday's downpour, threaded their silver ways.

The silent coppices were filled with the new music of countless miniature waterfalls. Overhead, the foliage of giant ash-trees was yellowing to the grave; the copper beeches were turning to yellow and green; the maples and wild cherries were a blaze of scarlet. The rowans were heavy with their winter burden of red berries. Through purple hazel coppices and through green spruces and brown larches, the hunters caught sweet glimpses of Blelham Tarn sleeping peacefully in the sunrise.

Before they reached the Roman Camp at the head of Windermere, they crossed the Brathay. The river was in spate and had half covered the alders which grow upon the islands in the river-bed. Never had the old ivy-clad bridge seemed more beautiful to Corah. The foaming waters beneath it were tinted with the pink and silver lights of the autumnal morning.

"It is lovely, isn't it?" said Syms, divining her thoughts. "It made even *me* write a poem once."

"Can you remember it?"

He flushed, and whipped the horse. "Oh, you would think it too frightfully sentimental."

"Then you *can* remember it? Do tell."

With a charming bashfulness, he quoted the following stanzas, gaining his nerve sufficiently, as he proceeded and found his listener appreciative, to emphasize the new meaning it now had for him:—

“ ’Twas wild and wet ; the west wind blew ; the woods and fells
were dead ;

Naught was heard but a sullen roar, as the foaming torrent sped
In the silence of the winter and in the gloom thereof.

But for me, Spring stirred in the dead woods, and sunlight shone
above,

And the world grew glad with music, when first I saw my dear
On the bridge that spans the Brathay, by sweet Winandermere.

“ Now the woods are blue with hyacinths, and gold with cowslip-
sheen,

The larches, revelling in the Spring, shoot forth their emerald
green,

Hedges foam with thorn-blossom, like wind-lasht waves of the sea,
The young lambs gambol in the fields, but Spring comes not to me,
Spring comes not evermore to me unless my love be near,
On the bridge that spans the Brathay, by sweet Winandermere.

“ Fair April brings the swallow and April the nightingale,
But my love comes not yet to me, bound on the homeward trail.
The mountains feed the river, as a mother feeds her child,
The river to the thirsty lake brings down his torrent wild ;
I thirst and hunger for my love, but no tide brings her near
To the bridge that spans the Brathay, by sweet Winandermere.

“ The brilliant chaffinch on the wing presses his ardent suit ;
Never a bird on hedge or tree languishes lone and mute ;
The amethyst rocks rise up from the purple shade of the Pikes ;
The beck to the shy primroses whispers of love, and strikes
Love music from his pebbles, but her voice no more I hear
On the bridge that spans the Brathay, by sweet Winandermere.

“ Shall I wait for her for ever, and wait for her in vain ?
Will the wild winds of September bring her to me again ?
Will she thread her way through daffodils, or, ’neath the sun-proof
trees,
Will she come to me fern-laden, midst the murmur of the bees ?
Shall I find her in the spring-time, or in the winter drear,
By the bridge that spans the Brathay, by sweet Winandermere ? ”

“ Oh, I like that,” cried Corah. “ There’s music
in that ! I had no idea—— ”

“ That I was a poet ? Well, I’m not, you know.

But I feel things, like other people, who, like me, can't express themselves as well as they want to."

"But you *could*, I am sure."

"Perhaps it's as well to let it alone," Syms returned, with a pleased smile. "We all have our little romances, I suppose. Some of us big ones. But, big or little, how seldom they seem to come right in the end, like the story-books! That was all I meant. I wonder if mine is to be any exception?"

He glanced at his companion. She was looking straight in front of her, and he saw her jaws set and her eyes harden. He fancied she was resenting his approach to intimacy. He would talk no more of love that day, he swore.

There were many other things to talk about, luckily. First they passed the head of Windermere, and paused for a moment to watch the grey lights and pearly distances on its still waters and wooded shores. So delicate were the tones of the atmosphere that, beyond a mile or two, it was impossible to distinguish where water ended and sky began.

"Still as of old at eventide
Peace kisses Windermere,"

Corah quoted.

After leaving Ambleside, they overtook Nathaniel Trout, the huntsman, swinging along the road with his hounds to the meet. Syms gave and received a hearty greeting. They passed through Rydal, and along the reed-fringed shore of that gem of tiny water-scapes, Rydal Mere. Syms pointed out to his companion the haunts of her beloved authors, Wordsworth, the Coleridges, and De Quincey.

They stopped at the head of the lake. It was a wild spot. Beneath them the River Rothay, issuing from the woods below Grasmere, wound through level watermeads. Above the road, on their right, a steep ghyll led up past Lord Crag, and Heron Pike, and Rydal Fell. Here they alighted. Syms sent his boy back home with the dog-cart. It was not long before Nathaniel Trout's horn heralded his coming.

"He would call that sauntering along," Syms observed. "But he must be going over five miles an hour now. And you will see how he covers the country when he begins to hunt. It is extraordinary. A huntsman in these parts needs iron muscles, sure feet, and sound wind. But other qualities, too, of mind——"

"Such as——?"

"Well, extraordinary keenness of judgment, for one thing, and an intimate knowledge of the most varied and difficult country imaginable, for another. He needs, as they say here, to be able to go blindfold, wi'oot a blenk o' daylight, fra Girsmer til Gaitswater. Nothing is more crude than the view held by some of our wise ones that a fox-hunter is necessarily a blockhead."

A tall farmer approached them.

"Good morning, Doctor. Naice droppy weather!"

"Aye, John, it is. And very mild."

"Aye, maist unreasonable mild."

"Will it rain, think you?"

"Happen it wull." Then, after a pause, the farmer added more cautiously, looking at Corah, "By and bye, ye ken."

Corah wondered whether he added this reservation

out of kindness to her, or to safeguard his reputation as a prophet.

"I hope it won't," she said. "Yesterday was bad enough to last for a week."

"Aye, we had a grand pash o' rain yesterday. 'Twas a wee bit back-endish, I'se allow, weet and weet a' day, and shoo'ers atween, ye ken. But no a *bad* day for a' that, I'se uphaud."

"The land needed it," Syms explained. "The point of view makes a difference, doesn't it?"

"Aye, t' land was fair scorched oop afoor. I felt fair set oop when I seed yon plop o' rain yesterday. Noo tae business, la'al Nat! Thou'lt show t' lassie some gradely hunting, an' hoo tae set about it, I'll wager a pun' til a hay-seed."

Nathaniel Trout, strenuous son of a father famous as huntsman for over fifty years, loosed off his hounds without further ceremony. They began to hunt up the glen at once, and out over the rugged breast of the mountain, searching for the drag of some fox, who might have returned from a nightly excursion to the hen-roosts in the dale. There was complete silence, save for the panting breaths of the "field," as they clambered up the glen.

The followers of the hunt, amounting in all to a dozen farmers and shepherds, broke up into little groups, taking this line or that, as fancy or experience dictated. Some, well versed in the ways and wiles of local foxes, had already ascended the ghyll, and were perched on crags and mountain-ridges above, where they indulged in a rest, and were in a position to view and signal the line of the fox. For though, as a rule, Reynard will remain in his own country,

a vixen will often lead hounds away from her cubs. Then the chances are equal, whether she make for Patterdale or Thirlmere, for Wetherlam or Easedale. A fox viewed on Nab Scar may be killed on Dunmail Raise or the Old Man, or upon that "awful curtain of rock called Striding Edge." In such cases, a hulloa from the stentorian lungs of a dalesman who has thus gone forward, and, perched amongst the cloud-capped mountains, views the varmint stealing away, will summon hounds, who would otherwise remain hopelessly at fault, perhaps, in the adjoining valley.

Corah and Syms attached themselves to a party of three shepherds, who had elected to accompany the huntsman at the tail of his pack.

They clambered along the banks of a beck in spate after yesterday's rain. The amber torrent, draining the peat-bogs above, tumbled over green rocks, danced and foamed in countless pools, and flooded over boulders apparelled in a rich vestment of golden and emerald mosses. Rowans and ash-trees and graceful silver birches, growing out of the clefts of the rocks in the deep watercourse, made "a soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs."

Suddenly hounds, "after a spell of silent, busy progress amongst dripping rocks and amidst a tumbled sea of tussocks and dead bracken, picked up the drag. First one spoke to the line, then another. The rest rallied to the welcome note. Soon the swelling chorus announced the joyous news to all the followers of the hunt.

Fortunately for them, and especially for Corah, whose utmost exertions had failed to keep pace with the rapid strides of the huntsmen, some slow hunting

followed. Several casts had to be tried before the true line was hit upon, and hounds went away. Followed a moment of rapturous exhilaration, as the whole pack streamed away in the direction of Rydal Beck.

Corah and Syms tore after them as fast as they could go, over the rocks and hummocks of turf and bog. Already patches of snow on the grassy slopes reminded them that they had ascended into a new climate. Presently the hounds disappeared before their eyes into drifting clouds of mist.

Already separated from their swifter companions, the pair were soon at a loss.

Behind the curtain of mist they could hear the music of hounds running. They caught in the distance the notes of the huntsman's horn. These sounds grew fainter and fainter. Even whilst they were clear, they conveyed but little information, to their unskilled ears, as to the right direction. They stopped to listen. Such was their eagerness, that soon they fancied that they could hear hounds running on every side of them. Who listens long enough, the saying goes, can always hear hounds, even when they are all safe at home, asleep in their kennels!

Corah and her companion, misled by the mist and the sound of tinkling becks, stumbled on, in this direction and that, until they found themselves upon the edge of a cliff. All around them the trail of the wind was scorched upon the fell top. A stunted holly, a withered thorn, a battered larch, stripped of branches on one side, bore silent testimony to the force of the gales, which had bared the summits of herbage, and combed the surface of the tops into ridge and furrow.

Sunlight was visible ahead. They crept cautiously forward.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Syms. "What a marvellous sight! We must be on the top of Nab Scar. Take care!"

Corah sank down on the rocks, and gazed at the scene below her. Shrouded in mist themselves, they beheld, in a setting of green verdure and of yellow and scarlet foliage, the waters of Rydal Mere hundreds of feet below, shining in amber radiance through a screen of golden reeds. Grasmere, orange-red, reflected the bracken-clad slopes of Loughrigg Fell. Above and beyond this faery scene, across the purple hollows of Langdale and Tilberthwaite, the tops of the Sca Fell and Coniston mountain ranges were wrapped in clouds and draped in mist.

"Just as we should look to them," Syms murmured.

For some time, silent and fascinated, they watched great curtains of mist rolling majestically from the rocky scarp of Bowfell down over the wooded base of lower Langdale. At one moment heavy clouds enveloped the tops in a thick pall of gloom; the next, they revealed, through rifts of vapour, delicate as gossamer, the rocks and ferns and heath. Shining through this iridescent veil of mist, the struggling sunshine bathed in rainbow hues the lower fells.

Then, out of the caverns of rain, the Witches of the Storm rode forth. Shrouded in ghostly white they sped across the front of the grey cliffs, whitening the green slopes underneath into gleaming carpets of driven hail.

"Miraculous!" Corah gasped.

"Yes," Syms agreed. "And we are supposed to be fox-hunting."

"Yep. But don't you see? if we weren't, we should probably be looking at these clouds from the valley, and thinking them a mere dank and leaden pall over our heads. Viewed from the high fells, one sees that they are full of life and colour and movement and ceaseless change. I *am* glad I came. I could watch those clouds all day, forming, dissolving, and reforming like that. They're just superfine and dandy, you bet."

Suddenly they both sprang to their feet.

A stentorian voice had boomed through their mist. Almost at their elbows, grey figures, which appeared gigantic in the half-light, loomed up and disappeared at a run.

"By Gad, what luck!" cried Syms. "Come on, quick! The fox must have turned back. We have had our rest, and are still up with the hunt."

So it proved. Reynard, after running down into Scandale, and thence half-way up to Dove Crag, had turned on his tracks, and was doubling back to Grasmere.

Helter-skelter, the hunt rushed in pursuit, under Lord Crag and Rydal Fell, tumbling in the mist down the stony watercourse, and the rough, grassy slopes of Greenhead Ghyll, out into the sunshine at the head of Grasmere valley, by the old Swan Inn.

Scurrying of sheep, panic-stricken at the passing of their foe, and many a view-holloa from workers in the fields and gardens, showed the line to the out-distanced footmen. But here the wise heads paused to take breath. They waited to see whether Reynard would

pass under Helm Crag, making for Sour Milk Ghyll and Easedale Tarn—that fairest, uncut jewel of the Lakeland wilds. Or would he work round over Blindtarn Moss, by Yew Crag, into Great Langdale? He chose the latter course.

“We’re done,” said Syms, as he watched the hounds streaming away up Blindtarn Ghyll.

“Don’t stop for me,” said Corah. “I can find my way home.”

Flushed and panting, hair astream, hat awry, eyes flashing, she seemed to Syms’ admiring gaze the very Diana of the chase. And she, in her turn, saw in the eager, boyish man, lithe and broad-chested, the very Apollo.

“I wouldn’t dream of it,” he answered. “But we might pick them up, if only we could get a lift over into Langdale. Hullo! Here’s our chance. You don’t mind?”

“I should smile.”

Syms had hailed a passing butcher’s cart. The good-natured driver gladly gave the hunters a lift. They crossed the Rothay, and passed through wooded lanes, along the far shores of Grasmere. Near the steep pitch of Red Bank they met a carrier, who told them that the hunt was making for Elterwater.

They drove on, therefore, with their friendly butcher past the glassy tarn which lurks beneath Loughrigg Fell. When they reached Skelwith Bridge, the polite butcher must leave them to make his rounds.

The Brathay, full-fed by the recent rains, was foaming down in spate from Langdale, and surging under the old stone bridge. But they had scarcely

time to look at the rushing waters before they heard a view-holloa.

“Tally-Ho! Tally-Ho!”

It was a cry which might, indeed, have awakened the dead. No lungs, perhaps, since John Peel was gathered to his forefathers, could have bellowed as John Jackson bellowed then.

“Why, that must be John Jackson!” cried Syms, as they set off at a run towards Oxenfell.

Hounds had been checked in Big Langdale. But, after a cast forward, they had followed the line down to Colwith Force. There again they were checked.

But good John Jackson, sitting quietly in his kitchen at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm, laboriously carving one of his ash-sticks into the semblance of the Grand Old Man, had heard the forest-music of the hunt. A minute before, he had declared that, come what would, he would not stir until he had “fettled t’ Auld Man’s collar oop til richts.” But in a flash he forgot his task.

“By Gocks,” he had exclaimed. “Yon’s hounds. I mun ga’.” What, after all, is a Gladstonian collar to a sight of hounds?

“Coom, Mollie,” Jackson had cried, as he flung down the stick, recalcitrant collar and all.

But Mollie shook her head. She did not feel like running, she murmured.

“Why-a. What hasta, lassie? Thou wast ivver yan for t’ hounds.”

Mrs. Jackson looked up quickly. She had been absorbed in the preparation of a “haugh” for the midday meal.

"Thoul't nivver gang afoor thou'st fed," she said, half coaxing, half threatening.

But Girt John left no time for argument. Seizing a slab of currant pasty, he rushed from the house. Not at random. Straight up the black peak, which loomed above his house, he strode. There, sitting and gazing, he had seen a movement of sheep upon the fell opposite. Then his quick shepherd's eye had caught a glimpse of a small, dark object limping desperately across an intake on Oxenfell. At the sight he had raised that great, deep-chested roar, which struck upon Syms' ears at Skelwith Bridge, and warned the huntsman by Colwith Force. The cry was taken up by a waller, who was mending a gap in a distant field.

Trout drew his hounds forward. They were soon streaming away towards Oxenfell. Corah and Syms and Jackson sped in pursuit across the road and up the fell. Panting and breathless they joined Trout on the top. He had covered two miles to their one and a half.

There were patches of snow lying amongst the rocks and heather. Hounds were running fast to a tearing scent. Trout half turned his head to welcome the trio with a smile and a nod of approval. His quick eye had marked his next foothold in a patch of snow. But when his foot touched ground, it gave way. The huntsman rolled over, like a shot rabbit, uttering a cry of pain. Beneath the snow there had lurked a loose, round stone.

Syms picked up the fallen man. His ankle had been badly sprained.

"We must get him down to your place," said Syms to Jackson.

Trout was half fainting with the excruciating agony. But when he heard Syms' proposal, he cried out—

“Thou'lt nivver can leave hounds runnin'. I'll bide liggin' * here till ye hev killed, and then. My foot's neider nothink nor somethink.† Bring ye back t' hounds. I'll bide safe, I'se warrant.”

He handed his whip and horn to John Jackson. The Man-mountain seized them, gripped Trout's hand, and rushed away over the fell. Corah and Syms, after a moment of hesitation, followed him.

Meantime, the fox had taken to the top of an open wall, and run along it, in full view, for nearly half a mile, gradually opening out a lead. For over screes and walls a fell-fox will outrun hounds. At length he dropped from the wall, and struck away towards the wild country beyond High Tilberthwaite.

Passing near a solitary farm, he thought to obscure his line in the scent of sheep, and to conceal himself in the buildings. But the farmer's house-wife had espied him. With a broomstick she denied him access to her hen-roosts, crying, “Thou'lt be oot o' this,” and sending him away left-handed for the heights of Wetherlam.

Reynard was now growing very weary and distressed, as well he might. Since he had been viewed at the farm, and had been forced to take to grass country, hounds had begun to overhaul him at a great pace. The sight of water in Pierce How Beck revived him. He splashed into it, and swam down it, washing and cooling his heaving flanks, well knowing that water carries no scent. When he had had

* Lying.

† Of little account.

a good bath, he emerged a quarter of a mile lower down, mightily refreshed.

At the water the hounds met with their first check. Hitherto, they had not felt the loss of their huntsman. Jackson, Syms, and Corah had had nothing to do but to strain every muscle in the endeavour to keep pace with the hunt. In a country where the nature of the ground compels them to rely much upon their own sagacity, hounds quickly acquire the independent spirit of their masters. They learn to hunt single-handed with extraordinary keenness and pertinacity. But here they were at fault. When Jackson arrived there was much delay.

The Man-mountain first drew them up the beck, then down, but not far enough. Then he cast back. In vain.

A quarter of an hour was gone. Corah had ample time to recover her breath.

Jackson was in despair. He threw down his whip.

"I doot we've lost him," he exclaimed, in utter vexation. "Whativver wul la'al Nat. sa-ay? I'se nae mair guid at huntin', sithee, than a cuckoo is at nestin'."

Now the fox on leaving Pierce How Beck, had taken to a wall, and begun to work along to the right, under Hull How, towards Little Langdale. He was intending, no doubt, to make his way back home to High Pike. But in so doing he made the mistake of his life. He was describing in his course a semicircle in front of the "field." And when he had come back to a point opposite to and scarce half a mile distant from the despairing Jackson, suddenly

a keen-eyed quarryman, who had clambered to the top of a heap of slag in the Tilberthwaite quarries, viewed him.

The valley rang with his hearty Tally-ho. In a second the hunt was away. The fox turned to climb Hull How. His last hope now was to find a "bolt" among the rocks. But the snow rendered it hard travelling for him. The hounds were now racing along behind him in full view.

As a last resource, he tried to baffle his pursuers by descending the face of a rough crag. But gallant Beauty—Trout's favourite hound—was not to be denied. She drove the fox from bink to bink. Jackson would not allow the other hounds to follow, so fearful was he lest they might all get crag-bound, or fall over the precipice.

At length, after an agony of suspense, during which the usually silent and self-restrained dalesman gave vent to a series of cries and objurgations, which sounded to Corah's ears like the ravings of delirium, fox and hound appeared almost simultaneously at the side of the cliff. In a moment he was run into, and rolled over.

Fell hounds do not break up and eat their foxes. Corah had the pride and pleasure of "lifting the brush," ere Jackson carefully picked up the dead body of the "old customer," and slung it on his back, preparatory to taking it home to be weighed and stuffed, and put under a glass case. Full twenty pounds that vixen weighed. Jackson earnestly assured the fair American that it was worthy to be kept as a "hairy-loom" in her house for ever.

"Aye," he said, as he gazed upon it in admiration,

“she’s a girt, hefty beggar, and geyly weel did she run, be-ath ower t’ borrans, an’ ower t’ fell.”

Returning thus in triumph, the trio found Trout lying in the heather, nursing his injured ankle. A sprained ankle is no joke, as those who have tried will be the first to admit. But Trout entirely forgot his own pain at the sight of the dead fox. He must have a full account of the whole chase and of the behaviour of each hound, before he would start for Mickle Lonethwaite Farm.

Syms improvised a rough sling out of some pocket-handkerchiefs, in order to carry the damaged foot clear of the ground. Then with an arm round the necks of each of the two men, the injured huntsman hopped down to the farm. For herself, Corah was not at all sorry that their progress was slow. As the excitement of the chase wore off, she began to be aware that she was desperately tired. Nor could she wonder. She realized how truly Syms had spoken, when he told her that a fell fox-hunter finds it hard to believe himself the distance he has covered by the end of such a day.

From Kate Jackson, when they arrived at the farm, they hardly received the warm welcome they expected.

To Jackson’s genial cry that they were hungry and tired as hunters, and ready for a bite an’ a sup, she replied that “a buddy couldna’ be expected to be ready for sic a girt lock o’ offcome foak,* in sic a desert-like place.” For Nathaniel Trout she expressed little sympathy. She asked him what else he could expect, but to break his leg? For a grown man like him, or a girt lump o’ flesh like John Jackson, to

* Such a crowd of strangers.

gang runnin' ower t' fells, joost like a harum-scarum la-ad, was nobbut temptin' Providence, to her wa-ay o' thinkin'. An' as for Miss Nailes, if she got led awa-ay intil sic-like wa-ays, she would soon find hersel' wo-alkin' wi' a girt, cloomsy stride, joost like country foak, an' a'.

"Nay, woman," Jackson interrupted at last. "Dinna fash thyself. An' dinna skyander us.* Gie us a bite an' a soop, an' hev' doon wi' thy grumblin's, awivver."

Mrs. Jackson turned upon him, protesting with an air of injured innocence—

"Grumblin's, sista. Hearken til him. Wya-a, whoivver heard t' like o' tha-at?"

"Ah, weel," groaned Trout, as Syms dressed his ankle, "grumblin' an' gruntin's nobbut t' Englishman's preevilege——, an' t' Englishwoman's, too, likely."

"Forbye what, I wasna' grumblin'," returned Mrs. Jackson, still in high dudgeon. "*I war nobbut pointin' oot.* Sae that's t' last word on 't."

Whilst this conversation was taking place, much to the distress of Jackson's hungry and hospitable soul, Mollie Atkinson had been quietly at work within the house. By the time that Mrs. Jackson had recovered from her surprise and sense of grievance, Mollie had laid the table in the centre of the room. A large hot-pot, simmering over the open fire, diffused a most appetizing aroma. Piles of bread and butter, jugs of beer and rich, creamy milk, and heaps of cakes and pasty loaded the board. Mollie summoned Jake Todd from the cow-byre.

They were soon all amicably feasting at the table,

* Don't scold us.

whilst Mollie waited upon the huntsman, who sat in the ingle-neuk, reclining his injured limb upon a second chair.

The conversation never drifted far from the subject of foxes and hounds. Mrs. Jackson recalled the number of chickens, which she and her neighbours had lost during the past year. She appealed to Mollie to verify the exact number she mentioned in connection with each farm. And, remembering her losses, she softened towards the hunters, as her avengers. Jackson spoke of the damage the foxes caused in the lambing season. And then Trout and Todd discussed with him the points and tricks and style and qualities of each hound in the pack. They all knew them well.

For every true dalesman can tell you the pedigree of every hound in the local pack. He has probably brought up some of the puppies himself at his farm, and walked others through the summer-time. He can point out how this hound differs from that in temper and cleverness. He knows the voice of each, and he will record how this favourite or that recalls the virtues of some famous ancestor. Even silent Jock grew eloquent upon a subject so close to every man's heart.

Flushed with the excitement engendered by Jackson's narrative of the chase, told a third time o'er, amidst comments and corrections by Trout and Syms, it was Jock Todd who declared that Beauty was a proper match for Cleaver, and had proved herself worthy of his blood, which she was known to carry in her veins. Beauty lay with her head upon the huntsman's knee, proudly conscious of such praise.

Then Corah must be told who Cleaver was. And Mollie shyly whispered to her the achievement of that famous hound, how he had once led two or three others after a fox from Ullswater, had hunted him the whole way to Ennerdale, and thence over Black Sail Pass down to Wastwater, and there killed him single-handed.

"Aye," Jackson assented, with a sigh. "An' if Cleaver had nae ga'en doon, t' girt dawg oot o' t' North wud hev met his match lang sin', I'se warrant."

"Aye, Cleaver war a singer, an' nae doot about it," murmured Todd, fondly.

"But what is the great dog you were speaking about, Mr. Jackson?" Corah inquired.

"What? Hasta nae heard tell o' yon dawg, that has bin worryin' sheep a' t' wa-ay fra t' Border til t' sea? Hoo lang sin'?"

"Nigh three months sin', I reckon," replied Todd.

"T' girt dawg o' Ennerdale war nowt til't," Jackson pursued.

"Aye, that was a terr'ble yan tae worry sheep," Todd interjected. "Lang whiles sin', ye ken, Miss Nailes."

"Forbye what, this girt dawg o' t' North is a sicht more wicked," continued Jackson. "Ivvery da-ay an' a' he kills an' worries a score sheep at yan steadin' or anudder."

"But why don't they catch him and kill him?" Corah asked.

"It's nae for want o' tryin', I'se uphaud. There's nae lack o' wull. But yon beggar is that naughty. He'll kill yan nicht at Hexham, m'appen, an' t' next on Shap. An' whiles t' lads o' Shap an'

Hexham are oot wi' their guns a' next da-ay in search o' t' brute, he'll be awa' i' Lannel, mebbe, or Kentmere."

"I had heard something about it," said Syms. "They say he travels twenty or thirty miles after each kill, and then lies up for a day or two, always killing at night, in some new district. He must be a very clever, as well as a very savage beast."

"He's a' that," Trout assented, as he fondled Beauty. "M'appen we'll coom across him some da-ay. Eh, Beauty?"

"Farmers is fair ruined by seckan a brute," Jackson observed ruefully. And Mrs. Jackson added, in her pessimistic way, "They'll nivver catch yon dawg. Now't nivver cooms tae ill, ye ken."*

After some further discussion of hounds and their ways, Corah and Syms took their leave. Trout remained with his pack at Lone Micklethwaite Farm, Syms having promised to let the Master know of his accident, and to return himself next morning to see that his ankle was going on all right.

"I hope you are not over-tired," he said to Corah, as they stepped out into the dusk.

"Not a bit, thanks," she replied. "The rest has made me as fresh as a daisy. It has been a good day, hasn't it?"

"Rather," Syms murmured. He tried to tell her of the pleasure that day had given him, in the charm of her company. But somehow he found himself inarticulate. The words he did think of stuck in his throat. Every nerve in his strong frame tingled with the desire to tell the fair girl at his side how deeply

* Things of no value never get broken.

and reverently he loved her. But he remembered that set look on her face, when he had begun to grow sentimental at Brathay Bridge. He remembered his oath not to speak of love to her that day. And he relapsed into silence.

The unspoken word, as much, very often, as the word spoken, is fateful. Had Syms spoken now, possibly impending doom might have been averted. For the girl herself, if he had but known it, was a-quiver betwixt hope and fear. Her hope was that he felt at least as much interest in her as she in him. Her fear was, that he might give expression to it.

She knew that if he did begin, she could check with one word of appeal, or command, the flow of such an honest and gallant comrade's love-making. Why, then, did she fear it?

They walked on in silence. Far off, a few lights shone out from lonely farms, like glow-worms on a summer's night. An owl hooted from the moor above, a solitary sheep coughed in the mist. The moon shone white in the heavens, and drew a path of silver across the still, dark waters of the Lake below.

In silence they reached the gates of Gallowbarrow Lodge. Corah held out her hand, and said, "Good night—and thank you, very much."

Syms took the proffered hand. He held it, and pressed it, just one second longer, perhaps, than a man who was wholly indifferent to her might have done. But his touch sent the blood surging to her cheeks, and drumming through her ears.

She turned and fled down the drive. Her eyes were filled with tears, her breast was heaving, and

her breath came in short, hard, stabbing sobs. For she knew that the fear which had been upon her was well grounded. It was not fear of Lancaster Syms. It was fear of herself. Fear, lest, if he began to speak, she would listen; fear lest, whatever he might ask her, to that she should consent.

In an agony of mortification, she realized that, at all hazards, she must make it impossible for him, as a man of honour, to begin the tale of love, which she longed, yet dreaded, to hear.

She met Bertram Leigh in the hall. He had just come downstairs, dressed already for dinner.

"I'm very late, I'm afraid," she said. "There's no time to explain. But, Bertram! Listen to me. It is absolutely necessary that you should tell father about our engagement to-night. That is, if it is to continue."

"But why?" stammered Leigh. "Why this evening, particularly?"

She stamped her foot impatiently. "Because I say so. Either this evening, or never," she answered, as she began to run upstairs. "It is not fair on——"

She paused.

"On whom?" asked Leigh, quickly. His heart stood still, in an agony of dread. Had she heard tales of Mollie Atkinson?

"On me, of course."

But she had meant Syms. And the pause, alarming her lover, decided him. He would obey, and beard the lion. For he perceived that he was nigh unto losing his bride, and her fortune, as well as his own. Which was a consummation too horrible to contemplate.

CHAPTER XIV

A LANG-NICHT DANCE

WHEN Martinmas is past, and the farm year is over, and the extra hands have completed the period of their contract, and have gone back to the hirings to wait, perhaps, until Spring returns and their services are again required on the land, there comes to country-men a term of rest.

The crops have been gathered in. The byres are stacked with hay and swedes to feed the stock withal throughout the winter and the long slow Spring. The orchards have been stripped, and the closets are stored with apples and damsons for pasties, with onions and potatoes for the pot. The sheep have been brought down from the mountains and are herded in the dales, or upon the slopes of the lower fells where snow falls lightly, and where they can be more easily guarded, rescued, fed. The long labours of the summer and the harvest are over; the long days gone, and the farmers of the dales settle down to enjoy the comparative ease of autumn.

Not that "t' back-end" is an idle time. Are there not fences and walls to be made good, hedges to cut and to bind, fields to manure and to plough, cattle to be fed, cows to be milked, markets to be attended,

young horses to be broken in, dogs trained ; are there not flocks to be shepherded ? But for all that, as the days draw in, and the sun's course in the heavens grows rapidly shorter, so that upon the golden reeds fringing the lakes, and upon the red-gold cloak of bracken-rust carpeting the hills the light at midday falls from the same angle as it did at eventide in the high summer, there does come a time of enforced leisure in the dales.

For when the cows have been milked and bedded down, and the shepherd has come home from fell or field at darkening, it still wants many an hour till morn. To escape from the burden of the slow dark days and the long nights, men's thoughts turn to social intercourse. Song and jest ring louder then from the warm, lighted bar-parlours of the inns ; then farmers foregather of an evening in the rooms of the village Institute to take a hand in a billiard tournament, or a game of chess, or a rubber of their beloved "whisk" (whist). But, above all, this is the season of the dance.

What, in a sunnier land, the joyous dances and the merry gambols with which he celebrates the vintage and the olive harvest, are to the gay native of Provence, that, and more also, is the occasional "Lang-Nicht Dance" to your true dalesman. A pair of dancing shoes is as much part of his equipment as a pair of clogs. His is an orderly and decorous festivity. There is no flirting, here, little talking, no sitting out in conservatories, no lolling in *kala juggas*, as in the ball-rooms of London or Calcutta. Here Coryphæus reigns supreme. The dance is the thing, and nothing but the dance. It is a ceremony performed with solemn

earnestness and unceasing vigour. Lad and lass part the moment the music ceases, and the sexes stand at bay, as it were, after each dance, until the new dance is begun and the couples once more "tak' the floor."

These festivities no longer, for the most part, take place at the farms or in the dancing-rooms of the public-houses, but in the village Institutes, or concert-rooms. The last of the old itinerant fiddlers, who once tramped the dales, wholly ignorant of written music, relying upon memory, ear, and illicit whiskey to see the night through, has long since yielded place to the more correct piano, and has gone, cap awry, bow in quavering hand, slavering to his hard-earned rest. "Old Tims" no longer wander, half-fuddled, from sheep-shearing to shepherds' meet, from dancing-class to hunt-ball, from coming-of-age to wedding feast, and even from the rush-bearing to the Christmas festival in the village church itself.

One bright November morning, shortly before the events recorded in the last chapter, Corah Nailes had joined Lancaster Syms, as she was often wont to do to accompany him on his walk over the moor to Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. They found Mrs. Jackson sitting in the sunshine beneath the stone porch of her house, nursing her baby. Opposite to her sat an ancient woman. She was small and light, but not bent. Corkscrew curls hung round her rosy cheeks and half hid her quick glancing eyes. Now and again she would lean forward and place a withered digit in the chubby, prehensile, rose-tipped fingers of the crowing child. Yellow jasmine, just bursting into flower, clambered over the old gray stonework above them, and, intertwined with autumnal

roses, formed a lovely frame to this picture of motherhood.

"Winter joining hands with Spring," cried Corah, as she beheld the women, and the flowers, and the babe.

Mrs. Jackson rose to receive them. She was ailing somewhat still, she said.

"Naebuddy knew till she had one, what a bodder bairns were."

Corah asked, engagingly, whether she might nurse the baby for a moment. Mrs. Jackson gladly resigned her burden to the girl. As the soft, clinging morsel of humanity nestled to her breast, the desire of motherhood knocked suddenly at Corah's heart. A flush mounted to her cheek. Her eyes grew soft, as she rocked her body to and fro, crooning over the tiny creature, whose rose-tipped fingers clutched at her bosom. She passed, for the first time in her experience as an adult, into the dreamy, preoccupied, exalted mood of maternity, dimly aware that she was regaining something long lost, the devotion and delight of a little girl in her dolls.

"Naebuddy kens till she has one, what a bodder bairns be," Mrs. Jackson repeated, looking at Corah, and speaking with acidulated emphasis.

The flush upon Corah's cheek deepened at the iteration of this remark.

The pang of maternal yearning, which had shot through her being, had been so sharp, so sudden, so intense, that, taken off her guard, she feared that she might have betrayed herself. She had glanced up quickly at Syms, in order to make sure that he had not seen, or understood. He had not.

But swift from the bow Mrs. Jackson's arrow sped, and struck home, showing that she had surprised her secret easily enough.

In maidenly confusion, Corah turned to play with the baby, whilst Mrs. Jackson introduced the old woman, who sat by her side.

"This is Mrs. Armit, my man's aunt's mither, ye ken."

It was now that John Jackson approached. The burly farmer had just returned from a journey to Coniston with eggs and butter.

"Were prices good?" inquired his wife.

"Middling," he replied absent-mindedly, for his head was full of a matter more important even than the price of eggs. "Nowt tae clack aboot." *

"Eh, lad," he said, turning to Syms. "Thou'lt be cooming to t' pill-gill at oor Assembly Rooms likely?"

"What's that?" Syms asked. "It's the first I've heard of it."

"A lang-nicht dance, to-day sennicht," was the reply. "'Twill be a gey fine do, I'se warrant. I wud fain see thee there, and Missy too. For I'se uphaud thou'lt dance wi' none else, eh, Doctor?"

Mrs. Jackson broke in sourly, unintentionally covering the Doctor's confusion.

"They're nowt o' t' dow,"† she declared. "They're nowt o' t' dow that pick an' choose at sic a time. Yan sud dance wi' each, and nae favour, says I."

"Nay, lass," retorted Jackson. "It's nobbut human nature, sista."

"Human nature!" repeated his spouse angrily.

* Nothing to boast of.

† Not the right sort.

"What hasta to dae wi' human nature, John? Thou'lt nivver gang til t' dance, awivver."

"Nay, I'se gaen, lass, whedder or no. Dinna fash thysel'! Though dances aren't what they were, I'se allow. Foak dinna use t' auld smoots,* ye ken. Nobbut waltzes, and polkas, and lancers an' sic-like, nooadays. Dom waltzes, says I. I'se fair shammed to see t' hoppin' and shufflin' and sletherin' and showlin' they ca' dancin' noo."

"Anyway, thou'lt nivver gang til yon dance, John," repeated Mrs. Jackson, with quiet determination.

"Dinna fash thysel', woman. I wull gang, awivver. What, them waltzes are as easy as muck, ye ken, Doctor. They hev fair ruined a' t' auld dances, as well as t' guid auld tunes."

"Don't they dance reels still?" Corah inquired.

"Na'ay, nobbut foursomes and eightsomes, mebbe. But threesomes, nivver."

"The threesome was the old minuet of the countryside," explained Syms. "There was quite an elaborate ceremonial to it. The men bowed, and the women curtsied, changed places, and moved this way and that. It wanted a lot of learning and practice, I believe."

"Aye," cried Jackson. "T' threesome wull bide a deal o' learning, surely. A man mun kna' hoo tae bow, an' a lass mun kna' hoo tae curtsey, an' tae keep time wi' his steps in a threesome. Tae dance a reel til perfection, a man'll need a partner who kna's his steps perfectly, what. It's nobbut human nature."

The glint of battle flashed again in Mrs. Jackson's eye.

* Ways.

"Human nature!" she sniffed. "But thou'lt nivver gang——"

"Dang it! I *wull* gang, woman!" cried the farmer. Then turning composedly to Corah, "Noo, ma aunt's mither yonder, she was t' yan tae dance yon reel. She'll be ninety-one, noo, likely, but lish * as ivver, I'se warrant."

Mrs. Armit looked up and laughed.

"Lish eneuf to dance wi' thee yet, Johnnie," she cried with spirit. And before Mrs. Jackson could protest, she advanced and curtsied to the big farmer. He in turn bowed, and started whistling an old reel-tune. Then, upon the cropped grass, in the slanting light of the November sunshine, with grave and courtly ceremony, the twain began to dance, advancing and retiring, bowing and curtseying with elaborate grace, passing and crossing, and stepping in perfect unison, and footing it with an agility as extraordinary in the heavily clogged giant as in his nonagenarian partner. Corah and Syms watched in silent wonder and admiration, till the dance was finished, and Jackson, not a little out of breath, led the high-spirited old dame back to her seat.

"By Gow," he exclaimed. "Thou's lish as ivver, Aunt Annie. Ninety, sista! But lish as ivver! Eh, but dosta mind thee o' yon rush-bearing awhile sin', when I and thou an' thy Jim danced awa' from eleven o'clock till twelve?"

"Aye, surely," panted the old lady. Her eyes were astream, and her apple cheeks scored and creased with the wrinkles of old age and laughter, like a

* Nimble.

mountain-side flushed in the sunlight and scarred with green ghylls and silver forces.

"Aye, surely. Yon was t' nicht t' passon sent his butler in tae borrow t' fiddler's bow."

"Saturday nicht, ye ken, an' nigh midnight," Jackson explained to Corah. "T' passon wud na' hev us break t' Sabbath. God rest him. Well, we'll nae break t' Sabbath t'day sennicht. I'll be back ere dawn, Kate, I'se warrant."

"Thou'lt nivver gang," replied his wife, shutting her lips firmly. "Thou an' thy human nature, what-ivver."

Corah and Syms presently took their leave. When they were well out of earshot, Syms burst into a roar of laughter.

"There will be some fun over this," he said. "It's a battle royal between those two."

"I wonder who'll win," said Corah.

There was a bellow as of an angry bull behind them. They turned and saw the Man-mountain hurrying after them, and calling to them to stop. He reached them panting.

"Abeut yon pig——"

"Oh aye, you were to let me have a side of bacon."

"Aweel, thou canst na' hev it yet. Pig's no deid."

"Why? Did the pig fall sick so that you could not kill it?"

"Naw. T' pig *was* ailing, but it got better!"

Syms with difficulty concealed his thankfulness for his escape.

"Thou'll be at t' dance, Doctor?" Jackson asked, coming now to the subject which had really brought him in pursuit.

"Aye, surely. And thou?"

"Surely. I mun tell ye, I'se *gaen*." He pronounced the word with tremendous energy. "It's gey time I put my foot doon, sista." He turned to Corah, and addressed her apologetically. "What, last Sabbath, ye ken, I was at t' kirk as usual, an' passon had got as far as t' litany. I opens my prayer-book, and whativver dosta think I'se finden thar?"

Corah shook her head.

"A wee slip o' paper. An' prented on 't were these worrds—'Hen-pecked husband.' Noo, I'm nae a teptious man, an' women be kittle cattle, as a' t' warld kens, an' I knaws. A man mun humour sic-like bodies, if he *be* a man. But, sista, when it cooms to bein' misca'd hen-pecked by a' t' foak, then, I says, John Jackson, by gum, it's time to put thy foot doon."

His tone challenged a reply.

"I see," said Corah. "So—so you *are* going to the dance next week?"

Jackson nodded his head so vehemently that Corah began to fear that he would really nod it off.

"I'se *gaen*," he repeated again with the same tremendous emphasis. And, turning sharply on his heel, he strode away, consumed with the very intensity of his resolve.

"So they have been pulling his leg, have they?" Syms observed. "And that has riled him into making one big fight for freedom. Poor Jackson! There is no better, kinder, braver man than Girt John, and few stronger—but——"

"But?"

"Is he strong enough to win this fall? I doubt it."

Syms was not the only one to doubt it.

Partly in order to emphasise his determination, partly to publish his freedom, partly, too, to confirm himself in his resolution, John Jackson spoke much and often during the coming week of the Lang-Nicht Dance. Every evening found him either at Harkerseat or Coniston; every evening heard him bang his huge fist upon the table of the public-house and declare—

“By Gock! I’s gaen. Wilt thou nae be thar’, lad?”

Whether he would or would not be there, soon became the one engrossing topic of speculation. Those who loved him best, held out against their better judgment, and nourished a dim, despairing hope that “Girt John” would grace the lang-nicht dance at Coniston. But even they were reluctant to put their money on it. Those who loved him less said bluntly that he durstn’t. And those who loved him least, openly derided his rebellion; declared that Kate Jackson was a match for “any twa o’ sic a saftie,” and loudly offered odds on the champion’s fall. But sourly and with increasing vehemence John maintained that he would be there.

Whilst John was thus loud in his asseverations, his wife maintained an almost sphinx-like silence. And yet the week had been amazingly full of opportunities for her usually eager tongue. Neighbours in astonishing numbers had dropped in, just to pass the time of day, at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. But in reply to the leading question, always skilfully introduced in this form—

“It’s a pity thou’rt sae poorly, Kate. But John wull be taking Mollie til t’ dance, likely.”

Mrs. Jackson always replied, "Nae, John wullna gang, awivver."

Her tone conveyed that the subject was disposed of, and did not admit of further argument.

The world began to be of Mrs. Jackson's opinion. But not so Girt John. The day of the dance broke upon a beaming, determined man. His spirits rose still higher, and his confidence increased, when, after a brief preliminary skirmish on the subject of the dance, Mrs. Jackson remarked that if John was going to enjoy himself without her, seeing that she was too poorly to go out at night, she herself would take a holiday in the day time, and would go and drink tea with Meg Todd, or mebbe Annie Armit, whichever way she felt inclined.

"An' I'll tak' Mollie wi' me forbye. What, a womanbuddy canna easy coom back alean wi' nowt but hersel' like, on sic a dark, rooky, rowdy, snawy nicht as yon will be, an' t' trod that slape,* an' a.'"

"Thou nivver says——" John began in protest. He had intended to take Mollie to the dance as a matter of course. But prudence prevailed. Mollie must be sacrificed. If he gave in with a good grace, and encouraged Kate to enjoy herself, she would not grudge him his victory, perhaps. So he concluded cheerily—

"Aweel, that'll be champion. Thou shalt hev thy pill-gill, an' I wul hev mine, lass."

Mrs. Jackson smiled sourly at him as he left the house and made his way up the fell.

"I wul be back by fower o'clock wi' t' sheep," he

* The road so slippery.

called back to her, "for a soop o' tea, an' tae dress, an' then."

"Thou weant * gang, awivver," she muttered.

John returned as he had said, in high good humour. He found the house empty, but his tea was laid out, and the kettle was singing merrily on the hob.

"She's a guid lass, an' a'," he murmured, "but bad as a Herdwick hog to turn, yance she's set agen owt. But a man mun be maister i' his ain hoose. I'se glad I've putten my foot doon, this yance. 'Twas a verra teptious job,† awivver. Women are parlish kittle cattle, I'se uphaud. But a man *mun* put his foot doon, yance an' agen."

The good farmer made tea, and when he had finished his meal, rose to array himself in his Sunday best before setting out to walk the seven miles to Coniston.

"I mun joost gie my feace a scrape,"‡ he said, talking aloud for company, for the house seemed strangely empty without Kate or Maggie. "An' then I mun don mesel' oot as nice as ninepence. T' lasses like to see a man donned oop fine, though I'm meair at heeam as I am, mysel'."

So saying he retired to the bedroom.

Thence there presently issued the noise of a man looking for things. Drawers were pulled out and thrust violently back. Cupboards of closets were opened and banged. Lids of boxes were flung noisily back, and fell to with an ominous crash. Came, too, the sounds of a man not finding things. Puffings and snortings were succeeded by exclamations of surprise, of wonder, doubt, confusion, supreme annoyance.

* Won't,

† Difficult,

‡ Shave.

Red and heated, Jackson at length summoned the farm-girl to his aid.

“Wharsta at, wharsta at, Belle?”

Belle left the children who had been confided to her charge, and joined him in the search. For his “Sunday best” had disappeared. If he could not find his gala clothes, he could not go to the dance.

All the drawers and cupboards were opened and shut again, all the boxes ransacked. In vain. Mrs. Jackson, of course, would know where they were. But it was too late to go in search of her. And, anyhow, the Man-mountain began to realize, he was not sure to which of the neighbours she had finally decided to go. To confusion succeeded savage rage, to rage succeeded despair, and a sense of utter impotence and defeat. At length Girt John abandoned the search, and dismissed the farm-girl.

“They’s mizzled,* awivver, they’s mizzled. And thar’s an end til’t. Thar’s an end til’t,” so he murmured, as he lit a pipe.

He slapped his great thigh, and cried aloud, “An’ ivvery lad, lass, an’ dog that can hirple† on three legs will be yonder dancing, yan wi’ t’ udder, an’ a’ clattin’ an’ laughin’ because Girt John hasna’ coom. By Gum! Thar’s an end til’t. They’s mizzled, awivver. Nay, it fair caps me.”

So exclaiming, he sank into a chair in front of the fire, and puffed lustily at his pipe. There, hours later, Mrs. Jackson and Mollie found him.

Mrs. Jackson’s tone, as she greeted her (morally) prostrate spouse, was ominously sweet and benign.

“Eh, John, what ails thee wi’ t’ dance?”

* They’ve got mislaid—disappeared.

† Limp.

"Nowt," he answered, and paused. Then he rose and dashed his pipe into the fire. "I'se gotten t' sneck-posset * fra t' missis, likely," he said darkly.

"What ails t' man?" asked Kate, innocently. "An' me coom heame sae fresh an' cheerful, like?"

"Aweel," retorted Jackson, "I'se nae ga'en til' t' dance, because I war ower thrang† wi' t' bracken harvest."

"Nowt o' t' mak!"‡ Mrs. Jackson replied, more sharply. "Whativver has coom to thee, John, flitin' like a bubbly-jock,§ that way?"

"It' nae manner o' use argy-bargying wi' me aboot it. She's chiselled || me gey weel, an' a'. They'se mizzled, an' thar's an end til't." Thus he addressed the silent and embarrassed Mollie.

"There's some foak 'at 'll stand on their heads, an' then be saying it's t' fault o' their shoon," Mrs. Jackson commented, with the exasperating aloofness of a Greek chorus.

Stung to incoherence, Girt John roared like that Leviathan.

"By Gum, woman, they'se mizzled, an' thar's an end til't."

Mrs. Jackson again appealed to the unhappy Mollie.

"What ails t' man?" she asked, "to mak' sic a rumble an' durdan ¶ 'at yan can scarce hear yansel' speak?"

"My claes, woman!" shouted John Jackson. "Wharsta hidden awa' my Sunday best?"

* Absolute refusal.

‡ Nothing of the kind.

|| Cheated.

† Too busy.

§ Turkey.

¶ Noise.

“Thy claes? Dinna be noising that way, man. Neath t’ mattress sure-ly! I’se putten ’em thar tae press ’em, like. Whar else wud they be?”

John Jackson sank back into his chair, feebly searching his pockets for the pipe he had thrown into the fire, and murmuring as one who has fought a great fight and has lost it in the end.

“Neath t’ mattress? Oh, aye! Neath t’ mattress. I nivver thowt. T’ dummle-head! I’ve nae meeair headpiece nor a sparrer. I’se stupid as a tup! Oh, aye, neath t’ mattress. . . . Whar else wud they be? Mizzled, I ca’d it. But thar’s an end til’t . . . thar’s an end til’t.”

CHAPTER XV

A LITERARY EVENING

EVERY stricken field involves incalculable consequences. So was it with the defeat of the Man-mountain in his struggle for domestic supremacy.

The story of his reverse spread far and wide through the Dales. At the telling, many an ardent swain, in distant steadings, was observed to grow cool. Many an eager rustic lover, who had been wont hitherto to press his suit, perhaps, too hotly, and to be snubbed for his pains, now wagged his head when matrimony was mentioned, and sagely argued with his elders, that it's a terrible hitty-missy job, is marriage.

The news of John Jackson's undoing was always believed to be the reason why old Dr. Merriman finally escaped from Cupid's toils, and remained to the end of his days—and they were many—the canty old bachelor the reader knows. The gossips were wrong. Now let the true tale be told.

For many years the old Doctor had carried on (or should we rather say, had most genteelly conducted ?) the most correct of flirtations with the widow Cunsey. His attentions, all agreed, were most marked. That is to say, he always sent her a bouquet of roses upon her birthday, and a basket of trout upon the

anniversary of her late husband's death, his demise having fortunately occurred in the May-fly season. Dr. Merriman it was, who always claimed the privilege of escorting Mrs. Cunsey to her carriage, after a whist party. He always dined with her on Christmas day, and on the New Year's morn appeared upon her doorstep at the earliest possible hour, in order to make sure that the first-comer was dark, and so to bring good luck to the house for the coming year. His hair, indeed, was silver now. But the tradition survived with him, and with her, that his locks were raven, as of yore.

"Here's a dark man come to bring you good luck, Mrs. Cunsey, and a Happy New Year."

Such was his annual speech, delivered with an old-world bow and a sweep of his hat. Then he would add in tenderer tones—

"Dark and true and tender is the North, as the poet says, Madame."

As often as not, the quotation would lead him, by a natural consecution of thought, to descant upon the evil effects of a north wind upon trout, from a fisherman's point of view, and courtship would be over for the day,—or year. But the gossips still wondered when "t' auld doctor" would make up his mind. The widow, they fancied, had made up hers.

Dr. Merriman was never otherwise known to quote poetry. And this fact, in itself, was regarded as an earnest of his intentions. Not only because poetry is inextricably mixed up, in popular estimation, with the business of love-making, but also because the clever old lady was known to have certain literary tastes and ambitions.

It had long been her avowed intention to write a novel, or, as she, in her more lady-like fashion, would have put it, to indite a romance. It should, in fairness to them, be said that the idea was unanimously discouraged by all her friends and relations. Some because they thought it was hardly respectable for an old lady to write a novel; some because they thought Mrs. Cunsey gave herself airs enough already; and some because they feared they might be expected to read the book when written. Old Dr. Merriman, alone, gave her some courtly encouragement. He alluded to her as the Semiramis of Harkerseat, and the Minerva of the Dales. Neither he nor she knew exactly what he meant. But it was understood that a compliment was intended to her literary gifts.

Now it chanced that about this time, the novel, upon which Mrs. Cunsey had so long been employed, was at last completed. It chanced, too, that she had recently been reading Foster's life of Dickens. Fired by the example of her favourite author she determined to read her immortal work aloud to a few chosen friends. Even as Charles Dickens had read the unpublished chapters of his novels to a select circle of literary celebrities in London, so would Mrs. Cunsey read the opening chapters of *Sir Patrick Puddiephat's Daughter* to friends, who would by that very act be exalted into celebrities.

The programme was to be tea, followed by a discussion on Swinburne, and, as the *pièce de résistance*, the recitation of some chapters of *the* novel.

The project was received by the neighbours without enthusiasm. Mrs. Cunsey's invitation to spend a

literary evening was frankly declined by the Vicarage, on the grounds that novel-reading was too frivolous an occupation for the serious-minded. Mrs. Butt was otherwise engaged. Mrs. Sharpasse escaped by declaring beforehand, with much acerbity, that "she hated poetry and all that sort of thing." Mrs. Derrydoe accepted first, and consulted her husband afterwards. Which, of course, was tantamount to refusal.

Captain Derrydoe, purple with rage as any bubbly-jock, held the invitation-card at arm's length, adjusted his glasses, and then anathematized all scribbling females.

"And this Swinburne, Ma'am. I ask you, is he a proper subject for discussion by a chaste woman like yourself?"

"I really don't know, my dear," replied Mrs. Derrydoe, trembling, "I had not thought of it in that light. I will see what Marie Corelli says about him."

"You may take it from me, Ma'am, that he is *not*," thundered Derrydoe, his voice rising in virtuous indignation. "Why, the fellow's a red Republican, or worse. Not that I have read a line of him. Not I. A red Republican, Ma'am. Kill the Captain."

He gave his Lady to understand that if she was not in bed with a severe cold and a sore throat on the evening of Mrs. Cunsey's Literary Party, she would be thrown into the lake. It was for her to choose. It should be whichever she liked best. He would be very sorry. But there it was. He *must* draw the line somewhere. He would have wished to draw it at pyjamas, as she well knew. But he did once and

for all, draw it at Swinburne, and red Republicanism. Kill the Captain.

Mrs. Derrydoe chose the less heroic course. Which happened, also, to be agreeable to herself, though Derrydoe never knew it.

Dr. Merriman, in fine, alone accepted and appeared.

He found Mrs. Cunsey presiding at her tea-table, attended only by her sister, who lived with her. She was a silent spinster, ten years younger than Mrs. Cunsey.

"It is very disappointing, everybody being engaged to-night," Mrs. Cunsey observed, "I am afraid we shall have to omit the discussion on Swinburne."

Dr. Merriman assented eagerly. His heart had been sinking at the prospect of maintaining a discussion about a poet of whose works he was profoundly ignorant. He did not even know whether he was a fisherman, or not.

"Never mind," he said, "we shall be able to hear all the more of the novel."

"Fit audience, though few," Mrs. Cunsey murmured, delighted at his gallantry.

A fire was burning in the grate. Dr. Merriman was given a large and very comfortable armchair in front of the fire. The authoress sat on one side, a reading lamp placed carefully at her elbow. On the other side sat her sister.

"Now mind, child," said Mrs. Cunsey to her sister, whom, although she was certainly the wrong side of fifty, she always treated as though she were scarcely grown-up, "it is just eight o'clock now. You are

not to move or interrupt till nine. Then you may put some coal on the fire, and say good night, and run away to bed. It doesn't do for little girls to sit up too late, does it, Dr. Merriman?"

The old man murmured assent, and snuggled down a little lower in his chair. He was thinking how comfortable it all was, how pleasant and how soothing the company, and how grateful the hot fire after a long day's fishing.

"Now I am going to begin," Mrs. Cunsey announced. "Sir Patrick Puddiephat's Daughter, Chapter 1."

"Oh, dear," exclaimed her sister. "Do wait a moment, I beg."

The old doctor sat up and blinked.

"What ails thee, Ma'am?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing, thank you, Dr. Merriman. Only I have lost a wire."

"Seek it in your hair, sister," said Mrs. Cunsey, sternly.

There, sure enough, it was found. For even as a city clerk, what time his thoughts turn towards lunch and dominoes, slips his pencil behind his ear, so would Mrs. Cunsey's sister stow her knitting needle, when not in use, in her abundant tresses. It was so convenient, she would explain, to know where it was, and to have it handy by. But in nine cases out of ten she would forget where it had been put.

"You are growing very forgetful, child," said Mrs. Cunsey reprovingly, and began to read.

She read in a quiet musical voice. It is probable that the plot was not wildly exciting. Dr. Merriman's

thoughts soon began to wander, first from the memory of the cold lake that day, and his long trolls for pike; then back to the contemplation of that delicious fire. It was a very comfortable chair too, *very* comfortable. Really very much better than his own armchair. It had been a good one when he bought it, he reflected, but probably the newspapers in the seat were not an altogether perfect substitute for the springs. . . . His head jerked violently forward.

He sat up, and looked hastily round. Mrs. Cunsey was reading steadily onwards; the sister was knitting, primly upright. All was well. Nobody had noticed. At nine o'clock the sister would retire. Then he would lay his head at Mrs. Cunsey's feet. For this was truly much more agreeable than his own cold, solitary cottage. Really it was a very pleasant way of spending the evening. And why should he not secure it for every evening? Very comfortable after a long day's fishing, *very* comfortable. . . . A hot fire after a long day in the open air does make one feel a little sleepy, naturally . . . it is just the time to be read to. She reads very nicely too, in quiet, ladylike tones . . . not enough to disturb you . . . in fact, it is rather soothing than otherwise. . . .

How long he slept he never knew. But later, much later, he woke suddenly—woke to that sudden guilty wide-awakefulness which comes to a man when he has overslept himself, and awakes too late to catch a train.

The reading had ceased. The novel had been laid aside. Mrs. Cunsey's sister had retired to bed. The second lamp had been extinguished. Mrs. Cunsey herself was placidly knitting. The *Nineteenth*

Century lay open upon her knee. The fire—the treacherous fire—had burned low.

Shamed and horrified, Dr. Merriman struggled to appreciate the significance of these facts. The situation was clearly beyond dissembling. To fall asleep in the presence of a lady to whom you are intending—and intended—presently to propose, is bad enough. But to fall asleep when she is reading to you her own immortal work, when your sleep must be interpreted by the sensitive authoress as directly induced by her story, is one of those errors of conduct so ghastly that it can never be apologized for, or explained.

Dr. Merriman quickly decided that he would make no reference to the book, and no apology for his slumbers. He would simply say good night, as if nothing had happened. He endeavoured to do so, but confusion overcame him. An awful possibility had suddenly occurred to him.

“I hope,” he blurted out, as he left the room, bowing before Mrs. Cunsey, icily polite, “I hope—I trust, I did not snore.”

He cursed himself for an owl, the whole way home. That idiotic sentence caused him more agony than the memory of his slumbers. It had made matters ten times worse. It seemed to involve, as he analysed it, that he assumed, since he had not referred to it, the obvious inevitability of a man’s going to sleep whilst Mrs. Cunsey read her novel. The most that could be hoped was that he should not snore!

Dr. Merriman’s courtship was at an end. A feeling of embarrassment on his part, and of a slightly injured vanity on hers, caused the old couple to treat each other, when they met again, after a considerable

interval, with a coolness which was only emphasized by a redoubled politeness.

Dr. Merriman was wise enough to keep his own counsel. But he knew well enough that the gossips would soon be seeking for a reason, when they realized that he had ceased to press his suit. Therefore it was, that whenever the subject of John Jackson's defeat recurred, he would sagely shake his head.

"Girt John is a girt fool," he would say. "It could but end in one way. Forbye the girt lubber has given a terr'ble ill lesson to the dales. The young men are not too forward to marry as it is. Though perhaps I should be the last to blame him. Mebbe, if he had won, I might have thought of matrimony myself!"

CHAPTER XVI

BEARDING THE LION

DURING dinner, after her eventful run with the hounds, Corah regaled her father and her lover with a lively account of the day's adventures. Nor did she omit a full description of the meal at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm, and the hound talk. Above all, she told in her most vivid fashion the story of the savage dog, which had been abroad every night for weeks, worrying the flocks, and was not to be caught.

Afterwards she retired early to bed, pleading fatigue, with every show of reason. She gave Leigh no opportunity for argument or explanation. Only, as she said good night, she said firmly—

“Remember, it's up to you.”

Bertram Leigh was left hesitating at the door. The clock struck ten. Nailes sat at his writing-desk at the far end of the room, his head bent over his papers. He had been writing busily. But he heard.

“Wa-al, Leigh,” he drawled. “What is it?”

Leigh started and closed the door. He strolled back into the room and lit a cigarette.

“It is as good an opening as any other,” he said presently. “I have to face the most awkward half-hour one man can have with another, and I must ask your forbearance.”

Nailes remained with his head over his papers, gnawing his cigar. He chose to hide the evil smile which spread over his saturnine face at the approach of the moment to which he had been looking forward for half a lifetime.

"Wa-al," he drawled again. "Phineas T. Nailes may be a bluff, but his long suit ain't glittering generalities. I guess you're a gabby young man, who can walk chesty and articulate at all times. It's up to you, Bertram Leigh."

His reiteration of his daughter's phrase stung his listener, who perceived, also, that Nailes had refused to pledge himself to forbearance or good-will. The interview, he deduced, was likely to be even less pleasant than he had expected. It would be best to come to the point at once without apology.

"Your daughter and I love each other," he said quietly, "and we want you to give us your approval."

"Golly! Chesty young men don't belong! Have you got bats, Mr. Leigh?"

"Meaning?" asked Leigh, coolly.

"Bats in the belfry. Are you dotty? Are you off your chump? Are you—but no. I'm not going to get mad. Though it is enough to make a man madder than a wet hen. You're a brash drummer and no mistake, Mr. Leigh."

"I don't understand your phrases," Leigh returned coolly. "But of course I know it is always hard on a man to be asked to part with an only daughter."

"That's so. And this case is aggravated. I am entitled to regard you, Mr. Leigh, as a crook who has presumed upon his job at this way-station to ensnare

a girl whose experience is not so large as her prospective bank roll."

The blood rushed to Leigh's cheeks and temples.

"You have no right to presume anything of the kind," he cried angrily.

"I shall presume what I darn well please. You can git."

With a great effort Leigh repressed his inclination to strike the man.

"I must really ask you to be reasonable," he said, when he had regained his self-control. "I shall not take abuse for an answer. I shall not go until you have at least stated your reason for refusing your consent to our marriage in a coherent manner."

"Bully for you!" cried Nailes, banging his fist on the table. "I said you were a chesty young man."

Leigh drew a sigh of relief, and congratulated himself on having kept so cool. This wild American had only been testing his nerve, after all, it would seem.

"Now we'll talk business," Nailes continued. "If you are in a position to marry my daughter, we'll fix it up, good and plenty. But if you are, I guess you must have made a ten-strike since we were in London?"

"What do you mean?" asked Leigh, swinging round. He was filled at once with rage, with loathing, and with fear, as he contemplated those rounded shoulders stooping over the papers on the writing-table, and listened to the millionaire's bitter drawl.

"Feels like being in the dentist's chair, don't it?" Nailes gibed. "What I mean is, that I suppose you

have gotten a mess of the long-greens, before making love to my daughter."

His tones, even more than his words, were insulting, maddening. But Leigh was forced to choke down his rage at each speech, because, in the first place, he knew that to lose his temper would be to lose the day, and, in the second place, because each insulting sentence that Nailes uttered, contained a morsel of American slang which he did not fully understand.

"I don't know what your ten-strikes and long-greens mean," he said sullenly.

"Oh, I'm rapping you on the quiet!" Nailes laughed in hideous enjoyment of his discomfiture. "But if a father don't have a young man up on the carpet when he is courting his daughter, and want to know how about it, he wouldn't be doing his duty to her, or her sainted mother." His voice died away into a snarl. "Long-greens," he continued presently, "are greenbacks—notes—dollars. Now do you understand?"

"I see," replied Leigh. "You want to know my financial position. It is not all I could wish. But I have brains, and energy, and—er—prospects."

"Surely. But so had Satan," Nailes retorted. "And you wouldn't choose him for a son-in-law, would you? What—er—prospects?"

The duel had been fought keenly, but always on unequal terms.

Leigh threw the end of his cigarette into the fire with a gesture almost of despair. Nailes had broken through his guard, and his rapier pointed at his breast. He was silent for a moment.

"I believe you *know*," he said suddenly.

"How could I know?" Nailes retorted, but so lightly, that Leigh's heart stood still. Somehow the millionaire's tone had conveyed to him that he did indeed know and that he rejoiced in the knowledge, as one who hated him with a deadly hatred, and held him in his power. There had been no acting or testing of him in that first encounter, then, as he had fondly hoped. It was all in deadly earnest, and brutally true.

Leigh was silent for a moment, making up his mind whether to make a gambler's last throw. He was wondering whether it might not be best to explain the whole situation to Nailes, and be done with it. Fencing was useless with such a man. A complete confession of the truth might possibly disarm him. His mind was made up for him by Nailes, who suddenly changed the conversation.

"I suppose you are really in love with my daughter?" he asked in a kinder tone.

"I am. I am. Of course, I am. I think she is an angel upon earth. Noble and beautiful. I worship the ground she treads on. I know that with her to help and guide me, I shall be a better and more successful man. I might go anywhere, and do anything, with her help. There is no limit to the success we might not achieve. I would enter Parliament—take silk—end perhaps with the Woolsack and a Peerage—who knows? Less able men have done it. That would interest you—bring credit to *you*. With her aid——"

"You mean the aid of her dollars?" sneered Nailes.

Leigh had attempted to appeal to the man's vanity and self-interest. He had only succeeded in exposing his own selfishness and ambition, and had walked deeper into the trap Nailes was laying for him.

"Damn your dollars, sir!" he blustered. "Can't you get away from them for a minute?"

"Nope," Nailes returned. "Not to-night. Sure, I can't quit thinking of dollars, not to-night. A young man is naturally all out for sentiment on these occasions. It's my duty to stick to business. Anyway I don't like you any the less for damning the dollars. It makes me think you would suit Corah the better. Corah is always damning the dollars."

Once again the skilled swordsman had been disarmed in the rapier-play of dialectic.

Leigh was silent.

Nailes, still with his back to Leigh, took up the Corsican dagger which lay upon the writing-table and examined it thoughtfully. He smiled as he read the word "vendetta" chased upon the blade.

"Wa-al," he continued presently, "you damn the dollars, and Corah damns the dollars, and you love Corah for her own sake. Is that so?"

"Most certainly it is so. You don't mean to suggest——"

"That you want to marry her for her fortune? Oh no! That is never done in England! But I want to be quite sure of your intentions."

"My intentions are to marry her, dollars or no dollars, because I love her and she loves me."

"Then that's O. K.," said Nailes, with an air of gratification. "In that case I agree. I give my

consent. I am glad she has not fallen into the clutches of a dollar-chaser. But you ought to be told—to avoid misunderstanding, you know, or any future trouble—you ought to know quite certainly and for sure, that Corah will never have a cent from me, whoever she marries.”

Leigh's feelings had been stirred to an almost delirious delight as he listened to the first part of the speech. He was congratulating himself on not having exposed his position further, a few minutes ago. Now, he was thinking, it is only a case of arranging matters. The second half of Nailes' speech plunged him into a bottomless pit of despair. He saw that he was completely enmeshed in the net of this cruel fowler. His jaw dropped. The sweat broke out upon his forehead. His knees trembled beneath him. He passed his hand over his mouth, with an almost pathetic gesture of misery and irresolution.

He was engaged to Corah Nailes. She was penniless and he was bankrupt—bankrupt, unless there was a sudden and sharp rise in Narragansett Rails.

The time had come to make a clean breast of it.

“Thank you,” he said at last. “She is worth a hundred fortunes. But if you prefer to leave her penniless, I ought to make my own position quite clear. That I suppose is what you were driving at before. I did not understand.” He spoke in feeble tones, scarce audible.

“Sure.”

“Well, my position is, quite simply, that—that if there is a sharp rise in Narragansett Rails, I shall be

able to marry and keep her in comfort. If not—I am afraid I shall be bankrupt.”

“In that case,” drawled Nailes, “I am afraid you will be bankrupt.”

The blood surged to Leigh’s temples. “But you can’t allow——” he began.

“Excuse me,” said Nailes. “It has nothing to do with me. And anyway, you look at the thing in the right way. You damn the dollars and she damns the dollars. Wa-al, it will do the young people no harm to start where I started. Love in a cottage, you know, love in a cottage. You’re both of you just cut out for it. More than I was.” He ended in a curious inhuman snarl, as always when he referred to his early days and his wife.

Again the blood boiled up within Leigh’s heart. But he repressed it with a great effort.

“That’s all very well,” he endeavoured to laugh. “But in practice it is better to have something more substantial to fall back upon. You understand, we don’t want your dollars. But having obtained your consent without them, I have gone out of my way to explain my exact position to you, financially, because I am quite sure that, with very little trouble or expense to yourself, you can engineer a rise in that stock, which will make things easy for her and me.”

“Say, how can I do that?” asked Nailes, innocently.

“You know a thousand ways, well enough. With your control of the line and stock——”

“But,” said Nailes, speaking with slow, malignant emphasis, “I have no control over the Narragansett line. I shall be quit of my last remaining block of shares when these cables get to work.”

He flung down his hand on the sheaf of papers, and, for the first time during their interview, he swung round in his chair, intending to enjoy to the full the effect of his bomb-shell.

It was pitiable enough.

Leigh sank down into a chair, and remained there huddled up, in an agony of disappointed ambition and greed. His shocked brain slowly realized that, unknown to him, Nailes must have been selling steadily and heavily for months past. Hence the continual depression of the stock, which had never allowed him to realize the profits he had counted upon as a certainty.

"As you take such an interest in my financial transactions," said Nailes—"a thing, by the way, you will remember I warned you from the first not to do—I don't mind telling you my plan of campaign. It is to wreck Narragansetts. Owing to the buying of some fool gamblers, who seized hold of the wrong end of the stick, I have got out at a fair price. I have transferred all my holding in that line to the Chechecoo, which I intend to develop so as to choke the other altogether. Probably, some day, when the Narragansett Railway is in liquidation, I shall step in, buy it up, develop it or unthrottle it, and boom it again. It's a cinch, if you know how to do it, and keep your own counsel. But there, I am talking to you like a father-in-law a ready. I don't believe I ever took any one into my confidence before."

"That means ruin for me," groaned Leigh. "You can't allow that."

"Sure. Why not? You damned my dollars, why can't I damn yours? See here, young man!"

He dropped his half-bantering tone and began to speak rapidly, spitting out his words with indescribable venom. "It may interest you to know that I chose you for a son-in-law long ago, when we were in London. It was no compliment to you. I sized you up from the first. I knew you were a man who would do anything for dollars. You stand there, swanking in your jimmy little tuxedo coat, damning my dollars. But you have been gambling in my stocks, against my express stipulation. And you have been gambling against my interest. You did not even follow me. You tried to anticipate me. And by so doing you might have spoiled my market. As it is, you are a ruined man. And I am glad of it. I had a grouch against you from the first, because you cost me a mess of the long-greens over that Insurance affair. Now I have a double grievance. But we are quits at last. You stand there a ruined and dishonoured man. I knew you would, and that is why I brought you here. I know you do, and that is why I give my consent to your marriage with my daughter, Corah."

"Are you mad?" Leigh interjected.

"Never saner. I chose you for a son-in-law, for the same reason as I make no provision or allowance for Corah."

"And that is?"

"Because the greatest pleasure left to me in life would be to see you both miserable and starving."

"This is monstrous—monstrous!" Leigh ejaculated.

"You think so? Wa-al, I will explain. I dislike Corah for her own sake. You know some of the

reasons. I kick against her supercilious airs and her contempt for my work. But I hate her—yes, *hate* her, for her mother's sake. My wife left me, Mr. Leigh, soon after Corah was born."

"That has nothing to do with Corah," said Leigh, quickly.

"It has a great deal to do with Corah. Corah, for all I know, may not be my daughter at all——"

"This is devilish," cried Leigh. "But even if it were so, it is still not Corah's fault."

"No. It is her mother's fault. And the only way I can punish her is through her daughter. That is why I took advantage of the law which assigned her to my custody. That is why I have endured her in my house, these twenty years. That is why I look for my revenge when her mother learns that she has married a blackguard and a bankrupt."

White to the lips, teeth clenched, his dark eyes flashing fire, the blood thundering in murderous rage through his veins, Leigh sprang forward.

Nailes swung round contemptuously in his chair, and picked up the cables he had been writing.

"Good night," he said. "There is nothing more to be said."

"There is," hissed Leigh. With trembling fingers he pointed to the messages Nailes had written. "Alter those wires. Write 'buy' for 'sell.' That will send up the stock enough, I know. Write 'buy' where you have written 'sell.' Do you hear?"

"I should smile," replied the millionaire, coolly.

"You refuse?"

"I refuse."

"Then I will." Leigh snatched at the papers.

Nailes put out his hand to seize them. As he did so, he exposed to view the Corsican dagger, which he always used for a paper-knife.

Leigh's long dark fingers—tokens of the black blood which ran in his veins and which was boiling now in murderous rage—closed upon the dagger. Quick as lightning he raised it, and plunged it downwards with all his force into Nailes' breast.

It sank through the hollow behind the collar-bone, down into the millionaire's heart. With a groan he fell forward upon the table. He was dead.

Leigh seized the papers on the table, ran quickly to his room, changed his clothes, and rushed out into the night.

CHAPTER XVII

RED SCREES

BERTRAM LEIGH rushed forth into the night.

A curious jumble of emotions and ideas struggled for mastery in the murderer's whirling brain. Hope mingled with despair, savage joy with blackest misery. Come what might, he was glad that he had settled his account with that fiend, Nailes. Come what might, he had, at least, cut his way out from the network of sordid disaster in which his own unscrupulous greed and the diabolical cunning and cruelty of the millionaire had enwrapped him. He was quits with Nailes.

To this primitive emotion succeeded, as his blood cooled and reason commenced to reassert itself, a shuddering appreciation of the enormous folly of his deed. Murder is always irrational, whether it be the action of a crowd, a nation, or an individual.

As he trotted along the road to Ambleside, Leigh began to perceive the utter insanity of the idea which had prompted him to gratify his desire for vengeance upon Nailes. The notion that if he seized Nailes' telegrams, altered his instructions to sell, and despatched them in London next morning, was well enough. A large order to buy by Nailes would, undoubtedly,

send up the price of Narragansett stock. It would, probably, send it up enough to enable Leigh's brokers to realize on his behalf the long-expected profit on his shares. That would depend upon how much start these orders would have in the market, before the news of Nailes' death was received. But anyhow—and at this point in his calculations Leigh dropped suddenly from a trot to a walk, and, from a walk, came to a sudden standstill—whilst once again his hand passed over his mouth in a gesture of almost imbecile irresolution—*anyhow*, he himself could not profit by it. For to despatch these cablegrams would be to present the police with a clue to his whereabouts; to profit by them would be to convince the most mutton-headed jury of his guilt.

The sweat broke out on his brow. He was not so much horrified at his action, as amazed at his folly. He could not use the documents, to obtain which he had slain the millionaire. He was penniless and a murderer. On the other hand, he was glad he was quits with Nailes.

It was the incredible torture and humiliation of his interview with the man that had prompted him to that rash deed, far more than the temptation of seizing his papers and saving himself financially. Revenge had been the first motive, greed was only secondary. And therefore, in spite of all, he was glad.

But why had he been so insane as to leave the house and start upon this idiotic flight, without perceiving the futility of it? He had often wondered, in Court, at the blunders of the cleverest criminals. He understood now how they come about. A man is

insane—whether with rage, or greed, or lust, when he does such things.

He ought to return to Gallowbarrow Lodge, get back to his room, and appear next morning to share in the general shock of surprise. Or to rouse the household—explain that he had been out for a stroll before going to bed—and had returned to find Nailes murdered—no doubt by one of the many whom he had ruined by his financial transactions in America. But suppose the body had been found by the footman, who always sat up to put out the lights and shut up the house, when Nailes retired to bed?

The risk was too hideous. He simply could not face it. The noise of the wind, souging in the fir trees above the road, startled him. Panic seized him. He set off again, running in the direction of Ambleside.

It was but one more proof that his jangled nerves had not recovered from the paroxysm of insane passion which had prompted him to plunge the dagger into Nailes' heart. One more moment of cool reflection, and he might have returned to brazen it out, and to claim the woman whom he had made an heiress against her father's will. But no thought of Corah ever entered his mind.

One idea only possessed him now. He must get to the railway, catch a train to London, and disappear. There was no train from Windermere station till the early morning, and the news might be abroad in time for his arrest before he could join the express at Preston by that route.

No! He must walk over the Kirkstone Pass from Ambleside, and endeavour to catch the night mail.

The clock struck twelve as he crossed the bridge which spans the Brathay. He caught a glimpse of the mossy islets anchored in the dark swirling waters. It was the same bridge, with the same ivy-clad buttresses and the same alders overhanging the river which had moved Corah and Syms that very morning.

But Leigh heeded them not. Nor gave he one thought to the daughter of Phineas T. Nailes. Only he heard the clock of the Ambleside church striking twelve, and cursed the lateness of the hour. He hastened on at his topmost speed, slowing down to a walk when he reached Ambleside. The lamps were all out; the little town had long been buried in sleep.

"Yes," he reflected, as he walked casually through the steep winding streets, "that is the plan. There is every chance of success. Given twelve hours and a few pounds in his pocket, any man of resource ought to be able to disappear. The Scotch mail to Euston—the Underground to the Docks—a change of clothes with a Chinaman or a drunken sailor—a rough voyage on a sailing ship—what matter? Once landed in Frisco or Hong Kong, there are a thousand openings for a reckless man, and a man of brains."

He would start at once. And some day he would emerge—a rich, respected, Irish-American Boss, or a Mandarin. What matter which? If not quite the career he had mapped out for himself, it would, at least, be a vastly interesting one to live through. It should be the old story—

"What's become of Waring
Since he gave us all the slip,
Chose land-travel, or sea-faring,
Boots and chest, or staff and scrip? . . .

— Oh, never star
Was lost here, but it rose afar.
Look East, where whole new thousands are.
In Vishnu Land, what Avatar? ”

The sound of a policeman's tread in the adjoining street brought him quickly back to earth. This Avatar, at the present moment, was a bankrupt and a murderer. Not till he had crossed the barrier of mountains ahead of him must he dare to think himself free. He paused in the shadow of a house, until the footsteps died away. Then he started again at a rapid walk, heading for the Kirkstone Pass.

Ambleside lies at the head of Windermere. And straight out of Ambleside the ascent of the famous Kirkstone Pass begins. This direct route to the gap between Wansfell and Caudale Moor, on the one side, and Snarker Pike and Red Screes, on the other, is some three miles long. It is steeper than any similar length of road in England. At the summit, there is a small stretch of tableland. Thereafter the mountain plunges down into Patterdale and the glorious dale of Ullswater.

It was Leigh's intention to walk down that valley, along the shores of the lake, in order to join the railway at Shap or Penrith.

He reached the top of the Kirkstone Pass. He noted with satisfaction that there was no sign of life at the "Traveller's Rest"—the little inn which vainly boasts that it is the highest inhabited house in England. Utter stillness reigned on every side. Through the calm silence, the cold moon overhead threw a flood of silver light upon the road, and upon the boulder-strewn mountain-slopes on either side of the gap.

When he began to descend from the top of the Pass, and could see below him the steep road zig-zagging down into Patterdale, and beheld the still, square pool of Brother's Water shining in the moonlight, Leigh experienced a strong sensation of relief. He drew a deep breath, like some swimmer, who has made too deep a dive, and has only returned to the surface after the fiercest struggle, lungs bursting.

In the overstrung and irrational mood in which he now was, a mood of exhilaration ensuing upon his terrible paroxysm of fury, and the frightful reaction of despair, he fancied that the open plain and the railway beyond Ullswater was the bourne of his danger. Once clear of the amphitheatre of mountains which had ringed him in, he felt like a prisoner who had scaled the outer walls of his gaol.

But even as he sighed his relief, fear gripped his heart again, fear where no fear was. For suddenly on his left, he beheld a spectre—the vision of a ruined church. A phantom church, it must be, for here, he knew, was no sanctuary builded of men's hands.

Reason struggled for mastery with the flights of his disordered fancy. At last, after an interval, during which he seemed to lose all sense of time and space, reason and memory triumphed. He recollected that the Kirkstone derives its name from one of the groups of boulders which lie in a confused ruin of rock on either side of the road. This group of rocks bears a close resemblance to the fragmentary remains of an ancient church.

But the shock of his vision had unnerved him again. The sudden apparition of this mimic House of God, this imagined dwelling-place of the Most High,

whose Laws he had outraged, this home of all that is highest in humanity, all that aspires to Justice, Truth, aye, and to Retribution, appeared to his fevered brain like a summons to the Judgment Throne of God.

As though in the torture of some hideous nightmare, he flung out his hand to shield his eyes from the sight of the church, and cried aloud, "No! No!"

There came an answer to his cry. An answer that made his blood run colder yet, and his very heart stop beating.

For, from the fell-side on his right, and below him, there rose a long-drawn howl. It was a sound unmistakable, blood-curdling. It was the cry of a wolf—a wolf hunting over Caudale Moor, for its prey.

This, then—the thought flashed through Leigh's brain—was the explanation of the mysterious hound which the shepherds had so long been seeking in vain, in order to avenge his ravages upon their flocks. "T'girt dawg" was no dog, but a stray wolf—a wolf abroad this night on the Kirkstone, seeking his nightly kill.

The howl was repeated. It sounded more distinct in Leigh's ears, and, as more distinct, so more cruel, more threatening, more determined, *more hungry*.

Yet again the howl was raised. The wolf was behind him, below in the pass.

Leigh, who had stood still, in a daze of doubt and horror, started, and began to run. For the cry of the beast had changed its key. It was the howl, now, of a wolf which has struck a trail, and gives tongue, as it lopes hot upon the quest.

What trail? What quest?

The thought struck upon the listener's brain, searing it like hot iron, that the trail might be his own.

He left the road, and fled up the fell-side in a delirium of terror. Fled towards the chaos of rocks above, and, in particular, towards that huge boulder which had chiefly prompted the vision of the ruined church.

As he approached it, falling over hummocks of grass and heath, stumbling into holes and bog, he seemed to hear the sound of an organ pealing forth, where never sound was heard, except the natural notes of the wild, or of the wind rushing through the mighty gates of everlasting rock. He seemed to see, issuing forth from the phantom church, a congregation, where never congregation had met. At their head marched a man, clad in scarlet robes, a black cap upon his crown. He raised his hand, pointing at the fugitive, and, with the air of one having authority, turned to speak to a girl at his side. The moonlight struck upon her features. Leigh, with a cry of horror, recognized the blue eyes of Mollie Atkinson, shining from a pallid face. It was the face of a corpse.

He turned and fled from the phantom church, the huge rock on which had rested his last hope of escaping from his pursuer. Aimless, hopeless, terror-stricken now, he ran and clambered up the side of Red Screes. A louder, more terrifying howl from the beast of prey at his heels, announced that it had viewed its quarry in the moonlight. Leigh struggled desperately on. His breath came in hot dry sobs. His knees shook and quivered beneath him. But still he flung forwards and upwards. And still the cry of the hunting wolf drew nearer and nearer.

Through the thunder of his own heart's throbbing, and the surge of the blood through his ears, he was yet aware of the murderous gasps of the wolf, as it drew ever nearer and nearer. He threw up his head and took one despairing glance at the heights above him. There was no help, no hope there. Two stars hung in the cold dark sky above the ridges of Red Screes. Hard and pitiless, they shone down upon the wretched fugitive. He seemed to see in them the vengeful eyes of Mollie Atkinson blazing upon him in wrath and reproach.

He felt the hot stabbing breath of the approaching beast strike against his ankles, as it had been jets of steam from the exhaust of an engine. Another yard or two, and the wolf would spring, and pull him down from behind. No! he would not die so. With a screech, half cry for help and half roar of rage, the ultimate piercing yell of a man at bay, Leigh turned to face his savage enemy.

He flung out his arms in the vain endeavour to fend off the brute as it rose at his throat. He caught the gleam of red eyes. He saw a red wet hungry mouth snapping at him. He beheld cruel white fangs, dripping with saliva, flashing in the moonlight. In another second he was borne to the ground. The wolf's sharp teeth met in his windpipe. There arose a horrible, gurgling cry. But Leigh felt no pain of body. Only an unutterable misery of spirit filled him.

He knew that he was dying. The swift and inexorable vengeance of the Lord had come upon him. As he lay stark upon the fell-side, he beheld, beyond the outline of the shaggy head at his throat, a patch

of dark sky, and silver clouds drifting across it in the moonlight. They passed. And again two stars came out and stared pitilessly down upon him. They were the eyes, he thought, as his senses began to swoon, the eyes of Mollie Atkinson, flashing hatred and reproach.

Two days later, the long hunt for "t' girt dog," which had wrought havoc among the shepherds' flocks from the Border to Kendal, was brought to an abrupt conclusion. The engine of the night mail from Scotland, slipping down the steep incline of Shap, caught upon its buffers a gigantic grey wolf, as he crossed the line of the London and North Western Railway. The mangled remains were flung far on to the embankment.

The brute had escaped from a travelling menagerie in Scotland. Night after night he had lain concealed on the moors or in the mountains. Night after night he had changed his hunting ground by twenty or thirty miles. He had killed near the Roman Wall, on the lone farms of Northumberland, and about Hexham; he had killed in Cumberland, upon the great plain of Carlisle; in Lancashire, on the Furness Fells and by the Duddon Sands. He had killed in bonny Westmorland, along Kentmere and High Street. He had killed and worried countless sheep. Countless shepherds had sought for him in vain, next day. Two nights before the Scotch Express, swinging silently down Shap at seventy miles an hour, caught him unawares, he had killed upon Red Screes—but another kind of prey, abroad upon the high fells in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XVIII

JAKE TODD'S REWARD

MANY weeks elapsed before a shepherd, engaged in bringing down the ewes from Helvellyn, preparatory to the lambing season, chanced upon the bones of Bertram Leigh, where they lay, whitening upon the rocky slopes of Red Screes.

Men are not loved by women according to the ratio of their moral excellence. Were it so, that clever, selfish, cynical man would not have died in the possession of Mollie Atkinson, and the promise of Corah Nailes.

His disappearance had plunged the girl at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm into the blackest depths of passionate despair. The lady at the big house knew no such emotions. For she had not really loved Bertram Leigh; and she was aware that she had not. But now that the dark shadow of suspicion had fastened upon him, her generous devotion deepened. She at once proclaimed to the world that she was his promised wife.

Deep down in her heart she had the abiding consciousness of her weakness for Lancaster Syms. If Leigh had, indeed, slain her father, there was double cause for her self-reproach. For it was she who had sent him to the last fatal interview, in order to save

herself from that weakness. She could imagine well enough, when she allowed herself to imagine the scene at all, how he might have entrapped Leigh, and goaded him to frenzy. Fortunately, she could not imagine, and would never know, the last vile insult, which Nailes had cast at her through her mother. Nor need we inquire how far Nailes himself believed that monstrous charge against the wife whom he had forced to leave him, after she had endured years of cruelty in act and speech. Possibly—so curiously does a perverted human conscience work—he had really come to believe what he had said to Leigh about her, through having long nursed the idea, partly in order to justify to himself his hatred of her for leaving him, partly to condone, in his own eyes, the vengeance he was taking upon her, through her daughter.

The effect of Leigh's disappearance upon Corah, then, was to determine her in loyal devotion to his memory. If in spirit, though never in word or deed, she had faltered, and had allowed herself to be false to her plighted troth, whilst he was present, she would make amends by her passionate championship of him now. Even if he should never reappear, she would dedicate herself to him, in maiden widowhood. Pure, quixotic, spiritually-minded woman that she was, this resolve brought calm and courage to her mind. This alone enabled her to face the ordeal of the days which followed upon Nailes' death.

With sublime self-restraint, she passed through the necessary interviews with Dr. Syms and Mr. Sharpasse. She emerged from the painful business of the Coroner's inquest, shattered in body, but unshaken in spirit.

A verdict of wilful murder by some person or persons unknown, was returned by the jury. And there, until Bertram Leigh could be found, the matter must rest.

Meantime, Corah could but accept with utmost gratitude the offer of Lancaster Syms and Mr. Sharpasse, to go through Nailes' papers. It was an exceedingly difficult business. But one fact was easily established. No will could be found.

By the irony of events, Leigh's murderous blow made Corah one of the richest heiresses in the world. By the irony of events, Syms, who had refrained from telling her the tale of his love when she was really penniless, had now to share in the investigation which proved her to be possessed, in fact, of Nailes' immense wealth. And more than ever his lips were sealed.

It was with the deepest gratitude that Corah accepted the service of this loyal friend, how loyally rendered even she could hardly appreciate. His tender consideration for her, his complete self-effacement in working to help her in her distress—all this she recognized. But scarcely was she aware of what it cost him.

For Syms had suffered, as any man in his position must, when he heard Corah first boldly announce that she was engaged to Bertram Leigh. He had suffered, both because he loved her with all the intensity of a deep, strong nature, and because he had good reason to believe that Leigh was utterly unworthy of her. But there, again, his own honour and his respect for her sealed his lips. How could he carry tales of the dead man to her, who so proudly vaunted her love for him?

For both of them the weeks dragged slowly by. But events moved more swiftly at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. Mollie Atkinson had truly loved this man—this bankrupt, cynic, and murderer, this Leigh. With all the vehemence of a simple, humble, trusting nature, she had loved him. And she had given to him a woman's ultimate proof of her love and trust. He was gone. He had disappeared into the night, under a cloud of blackest suspicion, without one word of love, of warning, or of farewell to her. She regarded herself, in her simple rustic fashion, as his chosen wife. She knew now that she was to be the mother of his child. And with these secrets in her breast, she needs must hold her peace, and listen, whilst men declared him murderer and Corah Nailes proclaimed him to the world her own accepted lover.

What agony of spirit the poor child suffered in her loneliness and silence, few can appreciate, fewer still could describe.

Mollie Atkinson had sinned—and sinned deeply, according to the strictest code of the highest and best regulations of human intercourse. But, in yielding to the demands of her lover, before marriage, it must be remembered that she had not in the least become common or unclean in her own estimation, or, indeed, necessarily in the estimation of her particular circle. She had rather by her surrender, placed her lover under the certain obligation of marrying her. The supreme economic necessity, in the agricultural world of an ascertained fertility in women, renders the pre-nuptial guarantee almost a commonplace. This guarantee once given, the lover incurs thereby the heavier debt of honour.

None the less, when man betrays, it is the woman, as always, who suffers.

And Mollie, who had given herself in absolute confidence, found herself now in this hideous position. The man, whom she was expecting to marry her, had disappeared. He was proclaimed a murderer. He was announced to be the affianced husband of another. And she herself, who was shortly to become the mother of his child, could claim no sympathy, could advance no excuse, could expect no condonation.

Only one person understood and sympathized with her in her agony. And he, least of all men, could make his sympathy articulate. Only by his careful waiting upon her; only by his ceaseless watching and attention, could silent Jake Todd express his understanding and his unchanged adoration, with the mute devotion of a faithful dog.

And still no word or sign came from Bertram Leigh. The strain of waiting and of hoping against hope, grew daily more unbearable. The day when Mollie's shame must be published to the world drew rapidly nearer.

It was a Sunday morning in mid-December. The mountains were sunk in the abysmal silence of a warm Scotch mist. Not a cow lowed; not a sheep ba-ad; not a raven croaked. Only the occasional chirruping of a jenny wren or a pert robin, broke upon the unearthly stillness of the moor round Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. In the mute woods the air condensed upon the bare, yellowed trees, and fell in rain from the larch-chats upon a brown carpet of pine-needles. The trunks and naked arms of gigantic ash-trees and oaks, the graceful curving stems and

delicate branches of silver-birches, gleamed and glistened in the wet. The emerald green of the junipers was shrouded in a veil of silvery moisture. Great cushions of green and yellow mosses, clinging to dripping boulders, and luxuriating in the shelter of saturated coppices and sodden bracken, thrived beneath a canopy of dead brown leaves of oak saplings and beech groves.

As soon as breakfast was finished, John Jackson lit his pipe, took a preliminary glance at the weather, and prepared for a day of rest. He propped his feet upon the fender, and reached down, from the oak beams of the ceiling, an ash stick adorned with the half-finished physiognomy of John Bright. Mollie came in from feeding the hens, took her seat in the ingle-neuk, and commenced to knit.

At once her aunt began to discuss, for the thousandth time, the still engrossing subject of Nailes' death and Leigh's disappearance.

"T' dale is weel quit on 'em, to my way o' thinking," she announced.

Mollie knew that this was but the introduction to a recapitulation of all the incidents connected with the tragedy, accompanied by comments and criticisms, which were to her sheer agony. She had borne it often. To-day, she felt, it was no longer bearable. Life itself, which brought to her never any consolation, never any expression of sympathy, but only this eternal reiteration of torture, could no longer be endured.

There was a knock at the door. Jake Todd entered the room. He fingered his dripping hat nervously.

"Owt fresh, Jake?" inquired Jackson, genially.

"Aye. I thought happen ye wad fain kna'." He paused and looked awkwardly from Kate to John, and from John to Mollie. Upon Mollie his eye rested. Love was plain to see in his look, love, and the deepest sympathy.

"What hasta?" John asked, with some anxiety. "'Thou lookst as if t' milking cow had thrown hersel', or some sic-like ma'appment. Owt wrang, Jake?"

"Happen it's for t' best. They'se finden Mr. Leigh."

"Found him! Oh, where? Is he alive?"

Mollie had sprung from her seat and stood before him, pale and trembling, her hands clasped upon her heaving breast. Jake shook his head. Very tenderly he looked down into her pathetic, upturned eyes.

"Nay, lassikin," he answered very slowly. "He's ga'en doon.* They'se finden his bones amang t' rocks o' Red Screes. Happen it's a' for t' best, Mollie."

Unconsciously he held out his arms to save her, should she fall. She did not swoon, or cry out. Slowly and in silence, she sank back into her seat, dazed and stunned with the blow. She heard, without protest, almost without understanding, her aunt take up her parable.

"Eh, but he's saved t' hangman a job, likely. Weel, t' dale's weel quit on 'em bee-ath, to my thinking."

Mollie was deadly white. With a great effort she rose.

"I'se thinking I'se ga'en til t' kirk," she said.

She went out into the mist. She ascended the

* Dead.

stone staircase to her room, donned a hat, and stepped out on to the moor. Then she halted and returned. Entering her room once more, she drew forth the faded photograph of her poet-brother, the drug-sodden match-seller in Chancery Lane. She kissed it long and tenderly. Then she returned to the kitchen, where Girt John sat by the fire, still carving the features of John Bright. She went up to him, and kissed him.

"I'se ga'en til t' kirk, uncle," she reiterated, and was gone.

"Ganging til t' kirk on sic a da-ay?" Girt John exclaimed in mild astonishment, as he held up his stick and examined, with critical pride, the carven likeness of his favourite politician. "Ganging til t' kirk on sic a da-ay? Why-a, whativver ails t' lassie?"

The temper of the dalesmen is not, as De Quincey observed, constitutionally turned to religion. Works, rather than Faith, concern them; conduct rather than observances. They have none of that temperamental interest in doctrine, that love of theological discussion for its own sake, which distinguish their cousins across the Border. To them, the parson is, primarily, a man, whose business it is to bless, sanctify, and register their births, marriages, and burials. In the intervals, they expect him to show himself to be a true follower of Christ by being genial, charitable, and humane. If these conditions are fulfilled, your dalesman is ready to do his part—to attend a Sunday service, to listen to a sermon, and to put his dole into the plate. If the sermon is kindly, he does not mind its being dull. Vestments,

postures, genuflexions charm him not. He cares not in the least whether the parson turns to the east or to the west, or whether he wears his tie under his right ear or his left.

Any unwonted exhibition of devotional fervour is regarded, therefore, with surprise and some anxiety, as being possibly a premonitory symptom of an outbreak of that religious melancholy to which some are liable.

"Forbye, I've been thinking Mollie's nae been hersel' this many a da-ay," returned Mrs. Jackson. "Happen, she's gotten religious mania."

"God forbid," exclaimed Girt John, anxiously. "Mebbe, us sud ca' in Dr. Syms. Yon la-ad is ter'ble clever wi' his medicines, an' a'."

"Nay. Dinna fash thyself, John. I doot she's settin' her cap at some young fellow or udder."

John Jackson looked round. Jake Todd had disappeared. The Man-mountain gave a sigh of relief, which ended in a chuckle. He wagged his head, and was very pleased, and conceived himself to be uncommonly wise. He relapsed into silence, and returned to his carving with redoubled zest. So much so, that he sat for an hour without once stirring to pick up a live coal from the fire to relight his pipe, in the tongs which had been made for that purpose by his great grandfather, one hundred and eighty years before.

Mollie Atkinson walked rapidly over the moor, and down the steep path, which leads towards the church of Harkerseat. She stared straight in front of her. She saw nothing, heard nothing. Distraught, she passed, without heeding, the stile whereon she had

sat so often watching in vain for her brother to return—the stile whereon she had been sitting when first she met Bertram Leigh. Now he was dead. Her lover was dead !

That one overwhelming fact possessed her and benumbed her brain. For her the future held in its lap nothing, nothing but a broken heart and a woman's supreme shame. The torture of it was not to be endured. Still less the misery which her shame would bring to her simple, loving uncle. She must put an end to it all. She would go to join her lover. God have pity on her !

She passed the church and walked on in the same rapid, tense way, until she reached the head of the lake. Still without hesitation or pause, she rushed into the water. It was shallow for a few yards, then, she knew, shelved rapidly to a great depth. She stumbled on, and flung herself forwards into the deep.

There was a cry. But not hers. There was a struggle, but not of her making. From the mist on the shore there had emerged the form of a man, who cried aloud to her to withhold, as he rushed to her rescue.

Jake Todd had followed her from the farm. He had kept at a discreet distance, for fear of intruding upon her misery. But he was determined to see, as he put it to himself, that she came to no harm. When she passed the church, he knew that his worst fears were to be realized. Still keeping in the background he followed her to the lake. There the swiftness of her plunge had upset his plans. He had expected that she would at least hesitate. Then he would have come forward and prevented her from fulfilling her mad design. By the time she had flung herself into

the deep water, he was still only on the brink of the lake. He could not swim, but not for a moment did thought of self delay him: He seized a loose plank which had been floated ashore when the lake was in flood. He strode out into the water. When he reached the shelving depths, he rested his chest upon the plank. He was only just in time to seize the skirts which buoyed up the drowning woman. A second later, and the frail form would have sunk for ever into the cold and pitiless depths. Many, according to the grim tradition of the place, have gone into Leva's Water, but never one came out.

Some hours later, Jake Todd brought the news to Mickle Lonethwaite Farm that Mollie Atkinson lay, senseless, at the house of Dr. Syms. In the evening Dr. Merriman arrived, to give the latest tidings of her. Girt John and his wife had been told that they would not be allowed to see their niece, and the kindly old man was eager to allay their anxiety.

She was hovering, he said, 'twixt life and death. But she was young, and she would pull through.

"Sithee, John," he said, putting his hand upon the shoulder of Girt John, who sat staring in silence into the fire. "Sithee, t' puir lassie was clean mizzled wi' love, I'se warrant."

"Aye, aye, she mun hev been fair in it, head-a-ma-neckum, wi' yon scoundrel. An' us nivver gied a thought til 't. Oh, Mollie, my bonny wee lassikin, why didst thou na' tell me?" Girt John laid his head in his hands, and groaned.

"Forbye what, it's mainly what daftness, and

sic-like is love," observed silent Jake Todd, giving utterance for once to the bitterness of his spirit.

At this remark Mrs. Jackson fired up. She had been crooning over the baby she dandled upon her lap—the very baby whom Mollie had lovingly tended. The need of defending Mollie at all costs was sore upon her. She believed in the defensive-offensive. So she attacked the astonished Jake for his cynicism.

"I'se fair shammed," she cried, "tæ hear a canty bachelor like thee talking sae. Happen, what Mollie's doon is nobbut human natur', an' what we are a' here for. Mebbe, it's Natur's wa-ay, an' what dew please t' guid Lord best, an' then."

Dr. Merriman smiled. For he knew now that Mollie would still find safe shelter at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm.

Having suppressed Jake, and indicated her forgiveness of Mollie, Mrs. Jackson herself reverted to an unabashed contemplation of the dolefulness of things, looking at the situation from this point of view and that, with all the mournful pleasure in a catastrophe, which is usual in her class.

"Eh, but t'wul be a sad blaw to her brudder, an' him gittin' on sae fine i' London, an' a'. He's a grand poet, ye ken, is oor Jamie. Forbye what, he war reared at Mickle Lonethwaite Farm. Mair be token, I hev a keepsake o' him yet. Did I ivver show ye this, Dr. Merriman?"

She opened the door of the oak cupboard in the wall, and presently produced, with an air of supremest pride, a black, parched, and shrivelled object.

"Yon's Jamie's toe-nail. T' Poet's toe-nail, ye ken. Jamie lost it, when he war nobbut eight years auld.

A girt stee-an * fell on his foot, fra' off top o' t' wa' an' well-nigh broke his foot yan da-ay."

Dr. Merriman paid due reverence to the precious relic.

"Eh," sighed Mrs. Jackson, as she put it back into the cupboard. "He wull be fair shammed o' oor Mollie, noo, wull Jamie."

It was Jake's turn to flare up.

"An' wha's Jamie?" he cried, flushed with honest indignation. "He's nae yan tae be shammed o' oor la'al Mollie, awivver. He's nobbut a Hamlet o' a man, I'se uphaud. Happen he's a rare yan tae spout. But he wull nivver do mair than to-alk an' to-alk, an' mebbe scribble, wull yon. Wha kens? Wha cares? But yan thing, I'se warrant. He'll nivver be yan tae be shammed o' oor Mollie. Nay, nor any udder man. She's jannock, I tell thee, is oor la'al Mollie. M'appen she's fallen intill t' hands o' a rogue. But she's jannock!"

He paused, and looked round, astonished at his own eloquence. He beheld none but kindly approving faces.

"I'se ready," he continued, in a low, earnest tone, "I'se ready noo, as allus, ready, noo an' here, tae marry her mesel'. If she wull hev me. Not oot o' pity, ye ken. But gradely glad I wud be tae marry her mesel', knawin' full weel that neider I nor any udder man is worthy tae unloose t' latchet o' her shoon."

The Man-mountain left the seat, in which he had remained, in mute agony, ever since Jake had first brought the news.

* Stone.

“An’ thou shalt hev her, lad,” he roared, “if Mollie wull hearken owt til her auld uncle. Thou’st saved her life, an’ she shall gie ’t thee tae keep. Thou’s deserved her, Jake. An’ mair couldna’ be tellt o’ any man.”

He brought his huge hand down with a bang upon Jake’s shoulder, in a clap of gratitude that might have felled an ox.

Jake staggered, and, staggering, smiled.

“I wull exe her, an’ thou’lt exe her, an’ mebbe some da-ay she’ll tak oor tip, ye ken.”

And so, in the end, it turned out.

Mollie lay long, hovering between life and death. The young life, which Leigh had bequeathed to her, passed with the horror of his death and the shock of her immersion.

At length she was able to return to the warm welcome and safe harbourage of her uncle’s farm. Time passed. Encouraged by the vigorous exhortations of Girt John, she rewarded her preserver with the gift of wedded happiness, in which she shared.

CHAPTER XIX

AS IT SHOULD BE

MOLLIE ATKINSON'S attempt upon her own life thus ended, mercifully, in her gaining greater happiness than had seemed possible. It brought to her staunch lover the reward of his devotion, in the serene achievement of his long courtship.

It influenced also the destinies of Corah Nailes and Lancaster Syms. Corah, in the natural kindliness of her heart, paid frequent visits to inquire after the invalid, whilst she lay in Syms' house. She saw Syms there. She saw him at Gallowbarrow Lodge, when he was working on her behalf at her father's papers. But she was never allowed to see Mollie.

She had learnt something of her story. But not everything. She was aware of some mystery in connection with her. From Syms' manner, from the looks of others when she inquired after Mollie, she became dimly conscious that the secret, if there was one, was public property. She began to wonder why it was withheld from her.

Suspicion, doubts, imaginings, began to form themselves in her mind, thoughts arising from a vague jealousy, which she could not allow herself to entertain for a moment, and which she dismissed as soon

as they took form. But, again and again, before her will could operate, the rebellious thoughts returned.

On one of those still, soft, mild December mornings, characteristic of the lakeland climate, Syms sat at Nailes' desk, in the library of Gallowbarrow Lodge. He was elbow-deep in the millionaire's papers, at which he had been working all the morning. He frowned, bit his pencil, and muttered from time to time—

“The brute! The callous rogue! The unscrupulous rascal!”

His brow cleared, and a charming smile spread over his features, as he turned to receive a cup of cocoa from Corah's hands. The light in his brilliant blue eyes softened, as he relaxed from tense intellectual effort and moral disapprobation, to tender admiration of a lady, beautiful, gracious, and beloved.

“You can't work all day on nothing,” she said in explanation. “Even Dad could not do that. Well, what do you make of it—of all that bunch of stuff?”

She gave a contemptuous little kick to the piles of scrip and memoranda which lay scattered about the floor.

“Gently,” cried Syms, with a glance of admiration at the dainty foot. “Those papers mean that you are one of the richest, perhaps *the* richest woman in the world. There is no way out of it.”

“Oh yes, there is!” Corah returned lightly. “There is always a cure for riches.”

“And that is?”

“To get rid of them.”

“You don't mean to give them away?”

“Yep.”

"You must not be in a hurry. Indiscriminate charity——" Syms began.

"Oh, I know. But in my case the thing is simple. Though it will take some time and trouble to make certain of reaching the right people."

Syms glanced up again at the beautiful American. The admiration with which he looked into her frank eyes was no longer merely physical. The broad, smooth brow beneath the abundant tresses, the noble features beneath clearly marked eyebrows, the proud carriage of a lovely figure—all these were enough to stir any man to admiration. But, more than all, the untarnished nobility of her character appealed to him. She was not, then, to be defiled by the taint of great possessions. She would at least make a wise and charitable use of her father's ill-gained wealth.

"What do you mean by the right people?" he asked, after a pause,

"The people father——" she broke off, and finished with a query. "Dr. Syms, you have been living among Dad's papers for weeks. What do you think of him now?"

"I am filled with the profoundest intellectual admiration for the cleverness of his combinations and the grandeur of his schemes. And as for the nerve and ability with which he carried them out, they were simply Napoleonic."

"Is that all?"

"All that I can say to you."

"There is nothing you cannot say to me. I wish to know." She spoke proudly, as a queen, herself beyond the reach of criticism or reproach.

"Then I must add that I feel the profoundest moral

disgust at his methods. I try never to be censorious. I hate the cheap sensation of virtue some people so easily purchase, by 'damning sins they have no mind to.' But your father's methods were so cunning, so cruel, so diabolical in their ruthless wrecking of vast industries and countless homes, in order to further his Stock Exchange schemes, that—well, I am sorry. I have said too much, as I knew I should, if I allowed myself to begin."

"I thank you for every word. You know what I have always felt about my father's methods of piling up the dollars. Even his papers show, then, that I was not mistaken. I am glad you feel as I do. You will understand now why I shall devote my life to these dollars"—again her delicate little foot kicked the piles of scrip—"to getting rid of them, that is," she continued. "It will be a long business, I know, and verra difficult. One can never undo a millionth part of the ruin and misery he caused. But at least I can return some of the swag, when I get into touch with the real owners. Am I right?"

"Absolutely right."

"I ought to be thankful, in a way, that I have no other ties, or responsibilities whatever."

She glanced down at her deep mourning. The thought passed through both their brains that, if she had been Leigh's wife, her task of restitution would not have been so easy. Corah dismissed the thought with a shudder. Ever since his disappearance, she had vowed herself more certainly than ever to the cult of his memory. But too often the idol tottered, and then she chided herself as though guilty of a falling away from grace.

"My mother," she said, continuing her line of thought, "is provided for."

"Your mother," exclaimed Syms, in astonishment. "I thought she was dead."

"No, but she has married again. She had to leave Dad, you see." She paused. The memory of her conversation with Leigh at the dawn of their friendship came back to her. She shrank as she remembered how he had winced when she had told him. She hesitated to tell Syms. She almost feared that he might take it better than Leigh had done. If so, the idol would totter on the pedestal once more. She was forced to it, however.

"It is strange," said Syms. "I have found no trace of the affair in Nailes' papers."

Corah flushed. "It was not likely," she said. "Dad was very cruel to Momma before she was obliged to leave him."

She waited, literally trembling, for Syms' answer. It came. The answer of a true Sir Galahad.

"I can well believe it—from these papers.—And because, if I may say so, a woman must have been sorely tried indeed, before she would leave you."

"Thank you," she broke out. "Thank you for saying that! You are very understanding."

Syms smiled gratefully.

"I think many men understand nowadays," he said deprecatingly, "and more women, perhaps. Anyway, a doctor ought to. By the way, that reminds me. You are going to start on a great charity——"

"No. A great restitution."

"Well, a charity in cash. I am going to beg of you a charity of the spirit."

"What is it?"

"You know about little Mollie Atkinson?"

"Some."

"She is better now, though scarcely fit to be moved. But her aunt and uncle are very anxious to have her back at the farm. And altogether, that is much more suitable for her than being where she is. Village gossips would stick at nothing."

"I understand."

"So I have consented to allow her to be brought back to-morrow. It is a long, jolting journey for an invalid. If I think she is not bearing it well, and needs a rest, may I bring her in here on the way for an hour or two? I know it is a great deal to ask of you, but——"

"Why is it a great deal to ask of me? Of course, I shall be only too glad. Do you think *I* am so ready to sit in judgment?"

Again she chafed at the mystery which surrounded Mollie and her illness. Syms wished that he had not spoken. He had done so on the spur of the moment, without clearly realizing the inappropriateness of the suggestion. He determined at once that he would not at any price accept the hospitality he had craved for Mollie. But it was not necessary to say so.

"Many good people would think themselves contaminated," he said in explanation.

"My Christianity is not of that sort," she answered shortly.

"Nor mine, or I should not have suggested it."

No more was said. But again Corah's curiosity was piqued, and the old sense of jealousy revived. She was acutely conscious that much remained

unsaid, and unexplained. She could not know that Syms, least of all men, was able to explain the truth to her. His sense of honour tied his tongue. To reveal the iniquity of Leigh, would have been to clear the way for pressing his own suit. So long as Corah knew nothing of the scandal, she would continue to worship her idol. Until it were broken, she would listen to no other man. That was certain. But how could a man, who loved her, as Syms loved, inflict upon her the bitter pain and mortification of the horrible truth? How could he allow himself to profit by exposing the treachery of his dead rival?

The temptation was great. Doubly great, now that he knew that Corah was about to rid herself of her father's ill-gotten millions, and to restore them, so far as possible, to the fatherless and widows whom he had robbed and ruined. There was no longer between them the barrier of gold. But his lips were still sealed. For between them had risen, in its place, the shadow of her fantastic devotion to the dead man. It would vanish at a word from him. But honour forbade that he should utter it.

It was fitting that Mollie Atkinson should prove to be the *dea ex machina* in this crisis in their affairs.

Syms had determined that he would not take her into Gallowbarrow Lodge unless he was absolutely compelled. That, he judged, was not likely. He could not foresee that the journey home would be to Mollie even a greater trial mentally than physically. He could not know how full of bitter memories to her was the road she must traverse. From the stile where she had first met Leigh, to the spot where they had so often held tryst, every yard spoke to her of

vanished happiness and of his calculated betrayal of her trusting love.

The agony of these memories, added to the fatigue of the journey, proved too much for her strength. She was nigh fainting when they reached Gallowbarrow Lodge. Syms was watching her intently. His heart leapt up in appreciation when he beheld Corah standing at the Lodge gates, with a cup of beef-tea and some brandy.

"How like you!" he said quickly. "That is just the thing."

Corah advanced towards the invalid. The colour rushed back into Mollie's wan cheeks when she beheld her. Syms tried to intercept her. It was too late.

Mollie turned away her face, and put up her wasted hand.

"Hasta coom tae mock at me?" she cried in a hoarse, agonized whisper. "Likely thou's a gey fine lady, an' a', an' I'se nowt. But you stole my man fra' me, you stole my Bertram——"

The words died away on her lips. The frail body, shaken by the emotion of her spirit, collapsed in a swoon.

But the fact was out. One quick inquiring glance Corah cast towards Syms. In his confusion she read the confirmation of the charge. She covered her face with her hands, as though to hide her horror and her shame, and fled away over the moor. This, then, was the secret which all the world had known. And Syms, too, had known it and had endeavoured to spare her the knowledge. How splendid he was! How noble! How unselfish!

That aspect of the case grew clearer every moment, as the shock of her discovery passed. She was astonished to find how quickly she recovered, how calm her spirit was, how clear her mind. Horrified and disgusted as she was, the revelation of Leigh's infamy had actually removed a sense of oppression, which had long weighed heavily upon her, without her realizing it. It had been a forced duty, this false devotion to the memory of the man, who had always been unworthy of her. She would not judge or condemn him.

She would not allow herself to give way to the anger against him, which surged within her breast. Judge not, that ye be not judged. That was Christ's teaching, the one clear guide in all the crises of life. She had not cast a stone at this poor girl. She would not do so now. She would not judge her paramour. Only, for her, he must cease to be. She expelled him now and for ever from the sanctuary of her soul.

She was free, then! Her spirit grew light, and her heart throbbed with a strange gladness, as her thoughts reached this conclusion. Free, then, to be another's!

She had taken her seat on the knoll, whereon she had been sitting when Lancaster Syms had first spoken to her alone, and had saved her life, perhaps, from that horrid adder. She knew not how long she sat. But she began to feel lonely, to desire his presence to relieve her from the stress of her shame and sorrow, to share, it might be, something of her joy in her new-found freedom.

The events chimed with her wish. She heard Syms' step upon the road, as he returned from Mickle

Lonethwaite Farm. She would have called him, but he espied her and came straight to her unsummoned.

"I am terribly sorry," he began. "I tried——"

She held up a warning hand. "Do not speak about it. Never again another thought or word of him, so long as I live." Her voice failed for a moment.

Syms stood still in silent sympathy. She broke the silence presently.

"How long have you known?" she asked, looking up at his handsome face. There was something in her voice new to him; something strange and thrilling in her gaze.

"I have known some weeks. I had sad suspicions some time since."

"And you tried to spare me the shame and agony of knowing?"

"Naturally."

"It was very noble of you. I think I understand that it must have been very hard for you——"

The tears welled up in her eyes, her lips trembled. She opened her delicate white hands, palms upwards, upon the yellow grass.

It was a tiny gesture, a gesture of welcome, and of surrender.

Syms saw it. It seemed so wonderful to him, that he feared lest he might not have interpreted it aright. But he knelt down on the grass by Corah's side.

"Poor little lady," he said tenderly. "It is a cruel shame. And you have to bear it all alone."

Their eyes spoke unuttered words. Then Corah murmured softly—

“Must I?”

Syms did not speak. But his answer told her, clear as noonday, that never would she be alone in the world again, till death should them part.

“You will have to help me to get rid of my millions,” she laughed, as they rose at length to go home, hearts bounding.

“It will be no hardship,” he jested in return.

The short December day was drawing to a close. A delicate mist drifted across the green and yellow slopes of Loughrigg. And the dropping sun, shining, as it were, through tinted gauze, cast upon the fell side a radiance of rainbow hues.

“I accept the omen!” cried Corah, gaily. “Till to-morrow, then, beloved!”

THE END

